

**AMERICA LOST  
AND FOUND  
THE BBS STORY**



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# HEAD -ZAPOPPIN'!

BY CHUCK STEPHENS

An overdub has no choice, an image cannot rejoice.

—“Porpoise Song”

Where there is choice, there is misery.

—Swami

How's about some more steam?

—Sonny Liston

The final episode of the television show *The Monkees* aired March 25, 1968. Cowritten and directed by Micky Dolenz, it was entitled “Mijacogeo” (a.k.a. “The Frodis Caper”)—the main title an amalgam of Micky’s and his parents’ and sister’s names, the also-known-as a much-trafficked Monkees in-joke, “frodis” being Micky’s code word for weed. In “Mijacogeo,” Frodis is an alien being concocted from some rubber-plant fronds and splayed, mismatched leaves, with a cyclopean football forming its bobbing, drooping, one-big-eyed head. Once Frodis is loaded into its flying saucer and the saucer heats up, it emits an enormous puff of smoke that renders all who inhale it as docile as Dopey the dwarf. There are some who might argue that only a “head”—that



Aquarian-age catchall for recreational drug users who were hoping to ignite a revolution of the mind—would find such shenanigans (or any of the myriad other Monkees TV moments that featured a conspicuously power-huffing offscreen smoke machine or steam generator, nudge, nudge) amusing. Well, they might be right—though millions of Monkees fans stand ready, now as then, to shout them down.

So where were the heads, or indeed those Monkees millions, when in the closing days of '68 the *Prefab Four's*, and director Bob Rafelson's, big-screen debut, *Head*—arguably the most authentically psychedelic film made in 1960s Hollywood—came around? "*Hellzapoppin'* meets Peter Max" (as Dolenz once described it, referring to director H. C. Potter's relentlessly reflexive 1941 comedy), *Head* seemed at first glance to have been dreamt up by and made expressly for fun-loving dopers, a live-action *Duck Amuck* filled with more "far out!" narrative interruptions and sudden reveals of crews shooting movies within movies than *Contempt* and *Medium Cool* combined. But there was much more at stake in the movie than a giddy mind fuck for the chemically altered. What Rafelson and crew were after was a freewheeling deconstruction of the entire Monkees machine: an at once furious and playful assault on the manufacture and ongoing corporate manipulations



that had increasingly left the band members themselves feeling like overdubs without a choice, images unable to rejoice. "Wanting to feel, to know what is real": the lyrics of Carole King and Gerry Goffin's film-framing "Porpoise Song" paint a bleak picture of the Monkees' inner existences ("Living . . . is a lie"), and seemed to portend a kind of paisley-patterned anomie that, along with the film's ongoing acid-scrambled non sequiturs, left many hardcore Monkees maniacs scratching their heads, particularly as the Monkees seemed to be enjoying their on-screen auto-da-fé as much as anyone. Too hip for squares and too "Monkees" for the high and terminally hip, *Head* is exactly the sort of celluloid *whatsit?* that might easily have been an instant cult sensation had it been released directly to the midnight movie circuit five years later. Instead, cryptically undermarketed and offered to a moviegoing public already intoxicated by both the black-box-confounded primates of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the future-shock monkeyshines of *Planet of the Apes*, *Head* missed its mark with mainstream audiences—even as it emerged as an inadvertent stealth candidate for best American film of 1968: a masterpiece of formalist irreverence and psych-out satire rivaled only by Richard Lester's *Petulia* in its constant narrative innovation, and an overlooked harbinger of an unfolding New Hollywood.



**Head** was both the inaugural nexus of some of the most upstart talent emerging from the ruins of the old Hollywood and an unprecedented meeting ground of cultures high and low from late-sixties Los Angeles.



Archetypically of its time—even as it was way, way ahead of it—and as far as almost everyone seemed to think, completely out of its no-commercial-potential mind, *Head* was everything a surrealist “irrational enlargement” of the already endlessly reflexive Monkees show and its echt McLuhan-era conflation of genre hopping and channel flippancy should have been. Half nostalgic for and half nauseated by Old Hollywood, *Head*—a proto-*Greaser’s Palace* “sick” western, Corman-esque crypt-crawling horror flick, and sappy tenement romance (with former Mouseketeer Annette Funicello as Davy Jones’s love interest) rolled into one—was also, as Rafelson has often noted, his chance to cover as many film genres as he could, uncertain he’d ever get another opportunity.

The casting of the supporting players took a similarly far-flung approach. Off-Hollywood fringe dweller and everyone’s favorite lunatic Timothy Carey and the clearly bemused and bewildered former matinee gargoyle Victor Mature are the film’s guest stars: Carey as its all-purpose Maldoror, an avatar of bellowing evil endlessly waving shotguns, nooses, and marketing suggestions (“The whole phallic thing is happening!”) in the Monkees’ direction; Mature as the Big Victor (a dig at the group’s record label, RCA), sporting everything from Mother Gin Sling’s dressing gown to Sherlock Holmes’s deerstalker, and

occasionally towering over the proceedings like a giant, Naugahyde-tanned jinni from *The Thief of Burbank*. Creditless until its closing image, the Möbius *Head* begins where it ends: at the climax of one of its carefully designed, handheld long takes—a free-floating close-up depicting, against sound-design shards of radio squawk, microphone feedback, and tooting tugboats, a porcine pair of civic officials attempting to cut the red dedication ribbon on a newly built bridge (between TV and the movies?), only to have the Monkees burst desperately (“Here we come . . .”) through. Running—not walking—down their now abandoned theme-song street, the panicked band begin throwing themselves, starting with Micky, one after another, suicidally over the side of the bridge. But in the Monkees’ Book of the Dead, death is just another beginning (something like next week’s show), and their aquatic auto-annihilation is interrupted by a dazzling display of lysergically solarized mermaids and the psych-pop serenade of a laughing sea mammal (a sea Monkee?), who may very well be bidding the Monkees’ television career—or perhaps Monkeeness itself—“Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye.”

Whether *Head* was “meant” as a final farewell to the franchise that Rafelson and his production partner Bert Schneider had created and watched grow, in the space of two short years, into a multimedia empire or as a kind of



mind-blown, critically conscious but ultimately sympathetic exploded view of the whole Monkees music and marketing machine scarcely matters today; the movie that resulted does. For *Head* wasn't just another commodity in that season's avalanche of Monkees merch. It was both the inaugural nexus of some of the most upstart talent emerging from the ruins of the old Hollywood (Rafelson, Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper, Helena Kallianiotes . . .) and an unprecedented meeting ground of cultures high and low from late-sixties Los Angeles. Suddenly, here was a scene, and a new kind of cinema, that seemed as open to Bill Gazzari's supersexy Hollywood-a-Go-Go dancers as it was to postpop sculptor Ed Kienholz's nightmarish homage to lovers' lane necking, *Back Seat Dodge '38* (glimpsed during *Head*'s eye-boggling birthday party for Mike Nesmith); a place where Davy Jones could click his heels and warble Harry Nilsson's "Daddy's Song" with the thickest possible slathering of Manchester schmaltz, only to find himself and his dancing partner, the film's choreographer, Toni Basil, in the middle of a seizure storm of stroboscopic editing effects pitched somewhere between Bruce Conner's similarly Basil-saturated montage barrages *Cosmic Ray* (1962) and *Breakaway* (1966) and Paul Sharits's flicker-furious experimental protest poem of 1966, *Piece Mandala/End War*.



Indeed, the war seems to haunt *Head* at a variety of crucial turns, most outrageously in its use of one of the most gruesome newsreel images of the entire conflict: the on-screen bullet-to-the-temple assassination of an accused Vietcong saboteur by a South Vietnamese general—an image so ferocious few in Hollywood would have dreamt of emulating it, let alone incorporating it into the already culturally chaotic overload of a Columbia Pictures commercial vehicle built to promote one of America's favorite pop groups. And Rafelson didn't just include it: *Head* returns repeatedly, emphatically to that hideous head shot, usually in the context of legions of screaming, teenage, female Monkees fans. Only Japanese radical Nagisa Oshima dared collude in the co-optation of that famous piece of Viet War footage, featuring it prominently in his 1968 variation on *Head: Three Resurrected Drunkards*, starring sixties Nihon pop sensations the Tokyo Folk Crusaders. And Vietnam wasn't the only war that haunted *Head*: Richard Lester's John Lennon-centered *How I Won the War*, released a year earlier, left its mark on the Monkees movie as well. But where Lester—who'd wowed the pop-cult world in 1964 and '65 with the Beatles' smash screen successes *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* (which legitimized Rafelson's idea for the Monkees show, allowing it to get green-lighted)—had trodden as comedically as possible in

connecting the dots between his film's dark satire of World War I's battlefields and the current conflagrations in Southeast Asia, Rafelson and Nicholson went straight for the jugular, comparing (in a trench warfare episode built around Dolenz's spasmodic slapstick, the unlikely appearance of Green Bay Packers linebacker Ray Nitschke, and the screen debut of the gold football helmet that Nicholson would sport on his way to stardom in *Easy Rider*) the atrocities in the Vietnamese theater of war to the pressures of touring as one of the fan-mobbed and scream-besieged Monkees.

But how did *Head* come about and, perhaps more importantly (to lapse into the vernacular of its day), where was it coming from? Much of it, no doubt, was carried in on wafts of frodis, the main creative lubricant involved during the days the film's screenwriters—Nicholson and Rafelson—spent "soaking up all things Monkee," as Dolenz recalls the bull sessions leading up to the movie's script. Fresh from his screenplay for Roger Corman's *The Trip* the year before, Nicholson—in 1966 and '67, still dividing his time between roles in everything from *Hells Angels on Wheels* to *The Andy Griffith Show*, and collaborating as an actor, producer, and screenwriter with Monte Hellman on projects both realized (*Ride in the Whirlwind*, *The Shooting*) and abandoned (*Epitaph*)—was ready to help dose the Hollywood water supply in ways that American mainstream filmmaking wouldn't soon forget. But *Head* wouldn't just plumb the murky depths of a psyche on acid, or attempt (and succeed at) a film-formalist evocation of the broken, jump-cut flow of momentary enlightenments and fleeting miseries experienced by the tripping head; it would churn up (if not exactly exorcise) every Monkees-specific anxiety it could imagine—authenticity, plasticity, creative choices, product marketing, TV/movie studio as dehumanizing Dadaist turbine (complete with Caligarian conveyor belt), getting paid to throw a fight, ending up trapped in a box (vacuum cleaner, television set, fish tank), wondering who's the dummy. And all of it culminating in "revelations" that are as much Swami-endorsed

emanations of swamp gas as they are potheaded fodder for a quick dressing down by Jack Webb on the sixties revival of *Dragnet*. In short, *Head* (as its title suggests) might ultimately be read as a space-cake study of "the human mind . . . or brain . . . or whatever" and its capricious (if not always capacious) vicissitudes, as Peter Tork's loony Lotus Sutra near the end of the film insists.

Bold enough to have provided a template for follow-ups as varied in their methods, manners, and film-cultural pedigrees as 1970's *Myra Breckinridge* (with its far more inane barrage of Old Hollywood excerpts) and *Zabriskie Point* (whose climactic detonations merely double down on Micky's explosive confrontation with a recalcitrant Coke machine in the middle of the desert), *Head* is 1968 in an acid tab. Lost somewhere between wartime agonies and freewheeling love-in, it's time in capsule form, history as hopheaded high jinks and hilarious pop-cult aggression, a fearless exposé—and a perverse sort of celebration—of the commodification of the Monkees, the *Ulysses* of a hip New Hollywood about to be born. And accordingly, it concludes with a Joycean female pleasure giggle, from a radiant admirer who has kissed with infinite tenderness the lips of each and every Monkee—and then coyly left them all behind, with nothing more to say.

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# EASY RIDER WILD AT HEART

BY MATT ZOLLER SEITZ

George Hanson: They're not scared of you. They're scared of what you represent to 'em.

Billy: Hey, man, all we represent to them, man, is somebody who needs a haircut.

George Hanson: Oh no. What you represent to them is freedom.

When you think of Dennis Hopper's debut feature, *Easy Rider*, this hushed, almost tender exchange probably isn't the first moment that comes to mind. You're more likely to think of the coke-dealing bikers Billy (Hopper) and Wyatt (Peter Fonda) tripping on LSD with prostitutes

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**As Hopper and company shot the film in the tumultuous year of 1968, it became clear to all involved that this was something more than a quick-hit exploitation picture.**

in a cemetery, or roaring down the road while “Born to Be Wild” blasts on the soundtrack—if only because those signature “big” moments have been quoted, parodied, and ripped off so often since.

But that conversation between Billy and the alcoholic ACLU lawyer George Hanson (Jack Nicholson), I would argue, distills the film to its essence. *Easy Rider* is a record of a certain time in American history, and a chronicle of a culture clash that never quite ended. But it’s no mere historical document or cinematic curiosity. It’s a freewheeling take on freedom—what it means and what it costs.

Billy and Wyatt—who goes by the nickname Captain America, and has the star-spangled accessories to earn it—cross the United States in two senses of the word: in traveling from Mexico to Los Angeles, through the Southwest, and on to New Orleans, and in giving offense. They disrupt, oppose, betray. Like so many of the fringe characters the duo meet on their journey, Billy and Wyatt don’t have regular jobs, families, or homes. They live from one drug deal to the next, go where they please, and stick around until they feel like moving on again. This isn’t a philosophical statement on their part; it’s just how they happen to live—and Billy’s initial puzzlement at George’s analysis suggests that he’s never

thought of himself as a symbol of anything. But the representatives of America’s dominant culture—the go-along-to-get-along proletariat that then president Richard M. Nixon would describe as the Silent Majority—have been thinking in those terms, and as far as they’re concerned, these moon-child freaks are walking provocations. Billy’s and Wyatt’s appearances challenge prevailing notions of manhood (the bikers are routinely harassed for their long hair and eccentric clothes, and mocked as girls or queers). The born-wild bikers’ nomadic existence proves it’s possible to survive without becoming tranquilized zoo animals.

The word *freedom* also describes the mind-set that created *Easy Rider*. The film was shot totally outside of studio channels, for around \$350,000, and was cowritten by Hopper, Fonda, and novelist and screenwriter Terry Southern (*Dr. Strangelove*, *Candy*), all representing facets of the counterculture—a multigenerational catchall term that covered so-called Beats, or beatniks, in the fifties and early sixties and hippies in the late sixties and early seventies. They were united by their embrace of a bohemian lifestyle and their dissatisfaction with postwar America. Fonda came up with the germ of an idea for a modern western keyed to that sensibility and brought in Hopper and Southern as collaborators. Southern, who



had been traveling in hipster artist circles since the late 1940s (his friends amounted to a who's who of midcentury arts and letters—Nelson Algren, Kenneth Tynan, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Henry Green), was the most aesthetically grounded of the trio, and he took the first pass at the script in 1967. (And despite later revisions and on-set improvisations—and Hopper's attempts to diminish his role—Southern's influence on the final film can be strongly felt. Visual flights of fancy notwithstanding, *Easy Rider* is a spare, poetic work, marked by a mix of spiky humor and tenderness that's characteristic of Southern.)

Hopper originally approached exploitation master Roger Corman to produce *Easy Rider*, and he was game until Hopper's profane language and intense personality turned off potential backers during a meeting. Rebuffed, Hopper and Fonda took the project to Raybert, a young company headed by producer Bert Schneider and producer-director Bob Rafelson. Raybert had a well-established affinity for trippy material with a beatnik/hippie sensibility; the company had created the hit NBC television series *The Monkees*—and the band on which it was based—and at the time was in the process of spinning it off into the feature film *Head*. Raybert agreed to shepherd the project partly because it seemed commercial (the script fused elements of the biker flick and the hippie cash-in movie, two then profitable low-budget genres). But as Hopper and company shot the film in the tumultuous year of 1968, it became clear to all involved that this was something more than a quick-hit exploitation picture.

For Fonda and Hopper, in particular, the project became an opportunity to slough off oppressive influences. In Fonda's case, the looming shadow belonged to his father, Henry, an iconic leading man whose name had become synonymous with Roosevelt-style Democratic Party virtues and indestructibly decent screen heroes. Like his sister, Jane, Peter Fonda sympathized with left-wing American politics and disliked conventionally likable leading roles (he referred to his debut film, 1963's *Tammy and the Doctor*, as *Tammy and the Schmuckface*). He had survived a dark childhood with a controlling, sometimes abusive father, the suicide of his mother when he was ten, and an early brush with death after accidentally shooting himself in the stomach at age eleven. All these influences informed his portrayal of Wyatt, who seems a modern gloss on the strong, silent cowpoke but eventually reveals himself to be a wounded soul, an emotional catatonic deflecting any affection that comes his way.



For Hopper, the demons were more systemic. After early success as a supporting player in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and *Giant* (1956)—productions that introduced him to his friend and artistic Sherpa James Dean—he gained a reputation as a troublemaker, so devoted to Method acting that he argued with directors, slowed down production, and cost the studios money. By the time he started working on *Easy Rider*, he was a near pariah in Hollywood, supporting his photography and his art-collecting habit by taking whatever acting roles he could get (mostly on television). He treated *Easy Rider* as a laboratory in which to test his theories of what constituted truly adventurous writing, directing, and acting. And he drove himself and his castmates to give intuitive, risky, confessional performances. (For the New Orleans sequence with Karen Black and Toni Basil, Hopper persuaded Fonda to talk to a statue of a woman in a cemetery as if it were his mother. “Oh God, how I loved you,” Wyatt sobs.)

Hopper’s background as a photographer and art director informed the movie’s loose, inventive visuals. He encouraged his cinematographer, László Kovács—a survivor of the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary, who adored the American landscape—to shoot most of the film’s exteriors

with natural light. (Kovács’s highly expressive on-the-fly photography is a tour de force in the possibilities of the zoom lens, and an incalculable number of subsequent movies have tried to ape *Easy Rider*’s visuals.) Most daringly, Hopper eschewed straightforward plotting and instead devoted long stretches of the film’s running time to footage of the guys riding their bikes, while cities and towns and mountains and trees roll past them in a continuous geographic slipstream. He told his crew that he wanted the film to be a mind-blowing visceral experience, like Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which came out a few weeks before *Easy Rider* began production. That sounded like a good idea until Hopper proposed a nearly four-hour film with an intricate, time-shifting structure, then spent so many months futzing around in the editing room that Schneider took the film away from him and hired Henry Jaglom to cut a coherent, releasable version. The final cut is lean but not without its poetic flourishes, particularly the rapid flashback/flash-forward transitions between sections, which suggest moments in time being interlaced like strands of wicker.

The rest is legend: *Easy Rider* was lauded at the 1969 Cannes Film Festival. It became one of the most profitable movies ever made. It launched Fonda and Nicholson toward stardom, enshrined Hopper as a hero to wannabe indie directors everywhere, turned the contemporary jukebox soundtrack into a filmmaking cliché, and made Kovács one of Hollywood’s most sought-after cinematographers. And it emboldened Schneider and Rafelson to start a new company, BBS (with the addition of partner Steve Blauner), then to cut a six-picture deal with Columbia to make similarly distinctive low-budget films, which would include *Five Easy Pieces*, *The Last Picture Show*, *The King of Marvin Gardens*, and (although ultimately released through Warner Bros.) *Hearts and Minds*—classics all.

Given *Easy Rider*'s sledgehammer impact on pop culture, it's tempting to treat it as a fluke, a curiosity, and a time capsule, a film that became a surprise hit because it showed young viewers a life they knew quite well but that hadn't yet been accurately captured on film: the language, the sex, the drugs, the clothes, the music. That's true, but *Easy Rider* also transcends its cultural moment, because it's about more than bikers and hippies or the tension between libertines and reactionaries. It's about the difficulty of escaping social conditioning and economic imperatives and sustaining a truly free life. Hopper, Fonda, and Southern don't merely validate a mythical image of life outside the mainstream. They show how tough it is to live that way. The members of the commune Billy and Wyatt visit eke out a subsistence living. Our heroes spend so many nights outdoors not because they love looking at the stars but because even low-rent motels won't take guys who look like them.

In the oft-cited campfire scene near the end, Wyatt tells Billy, "We blew it." That line has been taken as an indictment of the American counterculture, which, like so many protean revolutionary movements, started self-destructing once it gained enough power and prominence to effect real change. One can read it that way. But the line strikes me also as a more personal sort of confession, an admission that they have ultimately succumbed and bought into their own outlaw version of the capitalist rat race—the idea that a man is not a true success unless he has accumulated enough money to stop working and take it easy. Albert Brooks's 1985 yuppie satire *Lost in America*, a movie filled with *Easy Rider* references about a couple who attempt to jettison their cushy suburban life only to panic over losing their "nest egg," astutely points out that the coke money hidden in Wyatt's red, white, and blue gas tank is a nest egg of a different kind. And it's grimly amusing to hear the hairy, impish

Billy crowing about how he and Wyatt are about to retire to Florida—like some old married couple from New Jersey. But it's also touching, and human. Like the hero of many a gangster or crime picture, they want to make one more score, then retire. But the universe has other plans. The film's piquant final shot—the camera rising away from Wyatt's shattered, burning bike—suggests a soul's ascent to heaven. It could represent the death of a man, or of a dream of revolution. But it may also signify the death of a false dream of comfort. Billy and Wyatt were born to be wild, and they died wild; in its twisted way, it's a happy ending.

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# FIVE EASY PIECES THE SOLITUDE

**BY KENT JONES**

The solitude. Of men, sometimes women, who refused to settle on a place, a role, a "stable" identity. They walked through my life for a few years when I was a boy—carpenters, child-care workers, counselors, psychiatric patients. Some of them were my teachers.

Were they happy or sad, kind or mean? None of the above. They were discontented with the choices offered to them. They were acutely aware of their discontent, and they were trying to find a way to act on that awareness. Now, in 2010, when conformity comes in an endless array of shapes and sizes and styles, these people would be classified under "the sixties," and then assigned one of the following subheadings: Selfish,

**Bobby Dupea and the world of his beginnings are so subtly shaded that he could have been created only by artistic temperaments similar to his own, with a shared yen to go deep into the heart of the outside world.**

Lost, Narcissistic, Alcoholic, Bipolar, Privileged, Disturbed, etc. But that's not the way I remember them. Back in those days, no one categorized, celebrated, or condemned them. You just watched and listened, and read their personal dissent in their eyes, their silences, their gestures. It's a kind of existence that is largely gone now. The people who lived it either adapted or shifted gears, stabilized or imploded. Some became realtors or contractors. One of them, the one I loved the most, took off one night and wrapped his car around an oak tree.

*Five Easy Pieces* was and is a great film because it gives us such a clear and unobstructed view of this particular type of American existence, brought into being at a certain interval in our history when the expectations of class and family carried more weight than they do now—"Auspicious beginnings—you know what I mean?" Film production is a cumbersome and lengthy affair, and the finished product, no matter how good, almost always lags behind or stands apart from its moment. Occasionally, though, when the conditions allow, movie and moment are one. Like Warner Bros. at the dawn of sound or Preston Sturges at his blindingly brilliant peak, *Five Easy Pieces* speaks with eloquence and simplicity from and to the America of its time, from melancholy opening

to ineffably sad closing shot. In 1970, it was a revelation. Today, it remains a shattering experience, in part because it contains an entire way of life within its ninety-eight minutes.

"The irresponsible behavior does not exclude a clear feeling that Nicholson is touched and perplexed by people," wrote David Thomson so perceptively of Jack Nicholson's terminally ambivalent Bobby Dupea. The same could not be said of *The Graduate*'s Benjamin or *Two-Lane Blacktop*'s Driver, two other famously irresolute heroes of the era, and the difference is telling. *Five Easy Pieces* is not a statement about America but a closely observed report. Or, perhaps, a confession. Watching the film is like being compelled to sit down with a stranger and hear the tale of an unresolved life: "I stayed for a while in Bakersfield, worked on an oil rig. My girl got pregnant. Then I went home, and that's when things started to go wrong again. Did I tell you I come from a family of musicians . . . ?"

Touched, perplexed, and, above all, curious. What would it be like to go through life with someone who listens to Tammy Wynette when you've been raised on Beethoven? Or to make a living working in an oil field when you've been groomed for a career on the concert stage? To live as if nothing were permanent and everything were up for grabs? There has



been a lot of ink spilled about the irresponsible behavior, but maybe not enough about the restlessly inquisitive nature that resorts to it to get “away from things that get bad.” Bobby Dupea and the world of his beginnings are so subtly shaded that he could have been created only by artistic temperaments similar to his own, with a shared yen to go deep into the heart of the outside world.

Bob Rafelson himself was born into the purple, as they used to say, and he left his home in Manhattan when he was young, setting off on a wayward trail that took him from theology school to breaking horses

for the rodeo, drumming in a jazz band in Mexico, fulfilling his draft obligations as a DJ for an English-language station in Tokyo, subtitling for Shochiku studios, and then into TV and film production in New York and Los Angeles. Rafelson’s friendship with Nicholson had resulted in the script for his directorial debut, *Head* (written in Harry Dean Stanton’s basement), and in Nicholson’s showstopping performance in the Rafelson–Bert Schneider-produced, and Dennis Hopper-directed, *Easy Rider*. “There’s quite a portrait dead center of *Easy Rider*,” wrote Manny Farber of Nicholson’s George Hanson. “Practically a novel of information, this character’s whole biography is wonderfully stitched from all directions.” A compliment to writers Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Terry Southern, but above all to Nicholson himself, an actor with a writer’s disposition.

Nicholson had come to Hollywood from New Jersey in the midfifties, and like a lot of young actors, he found himself taking classes with Jeff Corey. Corey had made a name for himself on the New York stage, then moved out to California in 1940, where he became a respected character actor and founded the Actors Lab. When he was blacklisted after taking the Fifth Amendment before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he started to teach acting out of his house in the Hollywood Hills. Corey’s tutelage went beyond craft and technique. “I was aware of the fact that there was a lot of healthy transference,” he said of his young students, who also numbered Stanton, Sally Kellerman, Shirley Knight, Robert Blake, Irvin Kershner, Richard Chamberlain, James Coburn, Carol Burnett, Warren Oates, and a tightly knit “wild bunch” that included Monte Hellman, Roger Corman, Nicholson, Carole Eastman and her brother Charles, Dean Stockwell, and Robert Towne. “I tried to be a good influence,” said Corey. “We not only talked about acting, but in the course of the work, I might make references to *Oedipus Rex* or the Bible or Greek mythology or music, or sometimes I’d urge them to read poetry. It was a broadening experience.”



For Nicholson, it was defining. "Acting is life study," he said, "and Corey's classes got me into looking at life as—I'm hesitant to say it—an artist."

Eastman was "eerily beautiful" during those years, Towne said, with "a head shaped like a gorgeous tulip on a long stalk." "Believe me, the first reason I was attracted to her wasn't that she was a writer," admitted Nicholson of the woman who would become one of his closest friends and collaborators. Eastman revealed herself to be an unusual and rarefied talent from the word go with her script for *The Shooting* (1967), one of two now legendary westerns Nicholson and Hellman made back-to-back (Nicholson himself wrote the twin film, 1965's *Ride in the Whirlwind*). *The Shooting* proudly bore the mark of what was then referred to as "European influence," and it was toward Europe that Rafelson told Eastman to look when she began to fashion, from his own drafts, what would eventually become *Five Easy Pieces*.

In 1970, the winds were blowing both ways across the Atlantic: Antonioni, Agnès Varda, and Jacques Demy had recently come to California (Eastman worked with Demy on his "American" film, *The Model Shop*); *Point Blank* (by the British John Boorman) and *Petulia* (by the American expatriate Richard Lester) emulated Resnais, and Antonioni's *L'avventura*

and Fellini's *8½* had become touchstones. Rafelson and his collaborators at the newly formed BBS Productions followed their European examples by divesting their movies of generic trappings and taking their inspiration from the life around them, fashioning a new and distinctly American mode of cinematic address in the process. Their cinema—which would also include Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show*, Nicholson's *Drive, He Said*, and Rafelson's later *The King of Marvin Gardens*—was quietly contemplative and patiently observant of characters and places we'd seldom if ever seen from Hollywood.

Unlike the many American films, before and after, that have struggled with class distinction as an issue, *Five Easy Pieces* takes it as a given and sees both ends of the spectrum with clarity and calm. And unlike Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*, another family-dynasty film, made two years later, Bobby Dupea never goes the way of Prince Hal or the Prodigal Son. He doesn't "come to his senses." His ambivalence is seemingly permanent, and he is self-exiled to his own terrible purgatory, forever on the verge. In order for such a narrative to work, every character and setting needs to be pungent and acutely drawn. So the oil fields and bars and bowling alleys and tiny houses in Bakersfield are as lovingly attended as the Pacific Northwestern Dupea compound (all rendered so vividly by László Kovács, who also shot *Easy Rider* and *The King of Marvin Gardens*), and the blue-collar pleasures Bobby shares with Billy "Green" Bush's Elton, Fannie Flagg's Stoney, and Karen Black's Rayette are as detailed as the familial in-joking and high-flown aesthetic conversations among the Dupea siblings and their guests as their silent father sits nearby. I've heard and read complaints about the second half of the movie, doubts over the veracity of this "elitist" family of musical prodigies—all I can say is that the people doing the complaining probably haven't spent much time around classical musicians. Lois Smith's Tita is a particularly fine creation—permanently adolescent, unkempt, dutiful, and

abstracted, her physical approach to piano playing in the recording studio (where she is sarcastically taunted from the control room by a masterful character actor, Richard Stahl) absolutely on target, from the Gould-like humming to the hunched posture. I suppose one could argue about the “intellectuals” and their theorizing about mass culture, perhaps too heavily pointed, but by that time, the movie has generated so much quiet force that it’s not such a big deal for Bobby to knock over a couple of straw men.

It’s Nicholson’s performance, of course, that lives at the vibrant core of this movie. “At bottom, I always thought that a part of Jack was sad,” Corey once remarked. “I don’t think it’s awful to be sad. Mourning becomes Electra.” It’s an interesting comment that illuminates Nicholson’s gift for sounding the most troubled and mournful depths of his characters and hitting on a beautiful harmony. Rafelson had to argue his friend into shedding tears for the film’s greatest scene, Bobby’s lonely confession to his unresponsive father at the top of a hill, written on the set by the actor. Not as instantly anthologizable as the celebrated diner scene, this is a high point in Nicholson’s and Rafelson’s careers, and in American moviemaking.

Bobby’s uneasy self-reckoning merges with the surrounding quiet and with Kovács’s embrace of inclement weather, and the scene builds unassumingly to a shattering conclusion with a simple and plainspoken admission that speaks volumes—“I’m sorry it didn’t work out.”

“There is no moral in this novel,” writes Philip K. Dick at the end of *A Scanner Darkly*, a kindred work from the same era. “It is not bourgeois; it does not say [the characters] were wrong to play when they should have toiled; it just tells what the consequences were”—a description equally fitting for this troublingly resonant milestone. And then Dick voices a sentiment that I’m certain would strike a chord with Rafelson and Nicholson: “I myself, I am not a character in this novel; I am the novel. So, though, was our entire nation at this time.”

*Kent Jones is the author of Physical Evidence: Selected Film Criticism, a volume of his writings, and the director of the 2007 documentary Val Lewton: The Man in the Shadows. A film he directed and wrote with Martin Scorsese about Elia Kazan is forthcoming.*





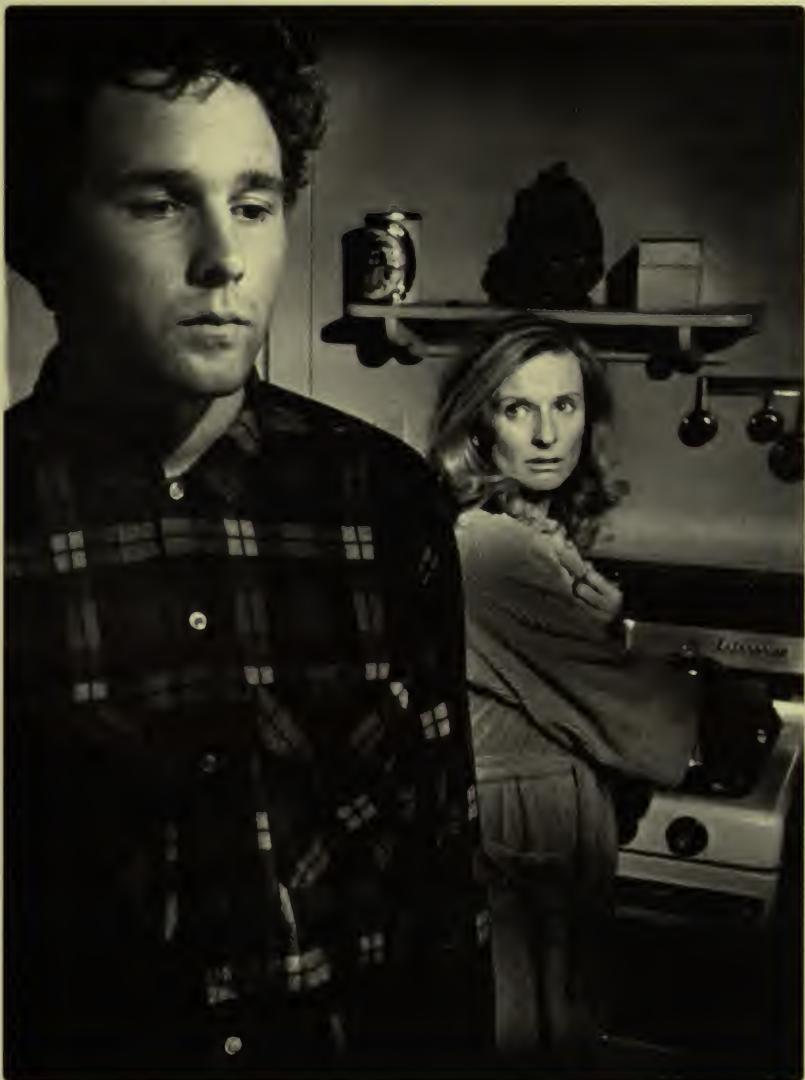
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# THE LAST PICTURE SHOW IN WITH THE OLD

BY GRAHAM FULLER

Early in Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show*, as the wind from the Texas plains whips the small town of Anarene, the high school senior Sonny Crawford (Timothy Bottoms) halts his recalcitrant pickup truck—Hank Williams is warbling “Why Don’t You Love Me (Like You Used to Do)?” on the radio—to give a ride to his mute young friend Billy (Sam Bottoms). When Billy sits beside him, Sonny turns his cap backward on his head, a gesture that makes Billy smile and that Sonny will repeat several times, and his buddy Duane Jackson (Jeff Bridges) once, during the course of the movie. Sonny, Duane, and Jacy Farrow (Cybill Shepherd), Duane’s girl, later sing their high school’s song, partly in affection,

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partly in mockery, as they drive in Jacy's convertible—the three joyfully united in friendship, no matter that both boys love this vain and luscious heartbreaker. It's 1951, school's nearly done, and anything is possible.

In these moments and others throughout his wistful film, Bogdanovich seems to be making the point that people are often unaware that the times they are living are the best of times, that simple quotidian rituals and shared moments are what make the long journey tolerable. Other rituals he depicts include Sonny's visits to Ruth Popper (Cloris Leachman), the neglected wife of the school football coach, for afternoon lovemaking that becomes more satisfying with each renewal, and the long hours spent in the Royal, Anarene's little movie theater, and the other establishments—pool hall, café—run by the grizzled Sam the Lion (Ben Johnson). As time goes by, these validating experiences slip away or terminate abruptly, leaving Sonny high and dry, with nothing but Ruth's anger at his desertion—that and the humbling realization that he has lost what was valuable. Though he hasn't got the wherewithal to leave Anarene, as Duane and Jacy do, the painful rite of passage will serve him well in the future. Maybe. At least, it will give him plenty of bittersweet memories, such as of his last peaceful experience of Sam, his and Billy's surrogate father, who takes the boys fishing at the tank and tenderly reminisces about a love affair. *The Last Picture Show* is like a multilayered poem in the way it indulges Sam's nostalgia—and ours for the veteran western actor Johnson—while feeding Sonny's future reveries about his own past.

The film was revelatory when it opened in October 1971, and it has proved the most assured of Bogdanovich's uneven career. With its eight Oscar nominations and two wins—for supporting actors Johnson and Leachman—it became a flagship of New Hollywood, though not that sprawling movement's most representative work. It was financed by BBS, which, in its earlier incarnation as Raybert Productions, had dreamed up



The *Last Picture Show* would be Bogdanovich's Fordian film, and one that paid homage to Hawks in passing. In looking back to what was timeless in their work, however, he was also addressing what was timeless in his own era of social and sexual upheaval.



the Monkees and delivered the countercultural shock of *Easy Rider*, and had just presented the existential angst of *Five Easy Pieces*. This was the maverick company, run by Bert Schneider, Bob Rafelson, and Steve Blauner, and abetted by Jack Nicholson, most associated with the seventies revitalization of American cinema, partially through the rejection of classical modes of storytelling. *The Last Picture Show* has a foot in both camps, the old and the new. Slow and mournful, it does not seem to have much in common with the work of other directors who emerged during the decade, especially vivid stylists with urban preoccupations like Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Brian De Palma, Paul Schrader, and William Friedkin, or a caustic observer of human foibles like Robert Altman. Yet it fully embraces the new era's sense of personal artistic vision. And like the other Raybert/BBS productions, it powerfully depicts loss, loneliness, the failure of family, and the pipe dream of love—themes very much of the time. Sonny is as alienated in his way as Nicholson's characters in Rafelson's *Five Easy Pieces* and *The King of Marvin Gardens*, and as Tuesday Weld's in Henry Jaglom's *A Safe Place*, which costarred Nicholson and Orson Welles.

Following the decade in which veteran directors like Ford, Hawks, Curtiz, Borzage, Anthony Mann, Capra, Milestone, Stevens, Walsh, Wyler,

Siódmak, and Jacques Tourneur made their final features, *The Last Picture Show* bids farewell, with its symbolic shuttering of the Royal, to Old Hollywood. It achieves this through its lovingly realized classical aesthetic and perfect period detail, which owe not only to Bogdanovich but also to the production/costume designer, Polly Platt (whose marriage to the director foundered when he began an on-set relationship with Shepherd). A cineaste influenced by the nouvelle vague, Bogdanovich had programmed films and written intelligently about cinema before making, under a pseudonym, his first feature, *Voyage to the Planet of Prehistoric Women*, followed, more auspiciously, by *Targets* (both 1968). He was a self-described "popularizer" and friend of some of America's preeminent auteurs, including Hawks and Ford, on both of whom he made documentaries. *The Last Picture Show* would be his Fordian film (as 1972's *What's Up, Doc?* would be his Hawksian film), and one that paid homage to Hawks in passing. In looking back to what was timeless in their work, however, Bogdanovich was also addressing what was timeless in his own era of social and sexual upheaval.

Welles, who was staying with Bogdanovich at the time he made *The Last Picture Show*, contributed too. Their talks apparently prompted Bogdanovich's crucial decision to have Robert Surtees photograph it in



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black and white, the better to facilitate deep-focus shots and evoke nostalgia for an ebbing culture, in the same way Welles had fondly if ruefully recalled the aristocratic Indiana neighborhood of the early 1900s in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942). The dusty aura of *The Last Picture Show* suggests less the pristine *Ambersons*, however, than Hawks's *Red River* (1948), Ford's *Wagon Master* (1950), and Nicholas Ray's *The Lusty Men* (1952). The use of long shots, isolating people in the arid outdoors, depriving them of intimacy, was Fordian—one thinks of Lois Farrow (Ellen Burstyn), Jacy's mother, taking a lone walk away from Sam's graveside. "Some of the best scenes that you make are in long shot," Hawks said. "I learned that from Jack Ford. Peter Bogdanovich has done that very successfully in *The Last Picture Show*, but he sat on my set for two and a half years and on Ford's for two and a half years, so he learned a few things." Surtees had assisted Gregg Toland early in his career and would have been familiar with his deep-focus work on Ford's *The Long Voyage Home* and *The Grapes of Wrath* (both 1940), and, of course, on *Citizen Kane* (1941). According to Peter Biskind's book *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, *The Last Picture Show*'s lack of master shots flummoxed BBS's Schneider and Blauner, but Rafelson allayed their fears, saying the film would "cut like butter" because Bogdanovich was editing in the camera.

The screenplay was adapted by Larry McMurtry and Bogdanovich from McMurtry's semiautobiographical 1966 novel, the sexual frankness of which made it a highly appealing property in 1970. McMurtry had been reared in Archer City, in the Panhandle Plains region of Texas. He renamed the town Thalia for the novel, and Bogdanovich, who shot the film in Archer City, changed Thalia to Anarene—to rhyme with the Abilene of *Red River*. In contrast to today's Archer City, sustained by oil, ranching, and McMurtry's latest bookstore, Anarene in the movie appears to be dying: a tumbleweed rolls ominously across the street near the end. The

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opening shot that tracks from the Royal reveals how desolate the town is; the answering shot that closes the film ends on the Royal, which has closed following Sam's sudden, offscreen death. Sam was Anarene's bastion of moral authority, as Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) is in Ford's analogous *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). Ben Johnson earned the role with his dignified portrayals of Southern-born U.S. cavalrymen in Ford's *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) and *Rio Grande* (1950), and the protective leader of the Mormon wagon train in *Wagon Master*—serene, canny gentlemen of the frontier.

Bogdanovich makes clear his influences. Early on, we see a *Wagon Master* poster outside the Royal's box office. The last movie shown there is, anachronistically, *Red River*, whereas in the novel it's *The Kid from Texas* (1950), which fails to divert Sonny and Duane from their thoughts about Jacy: "It would have taken *Winchester '73* or *Red River* or some big movie like that to have crowded out the memories the boys kept having," McMurtry writes. Sonny and Duane watch as Wayne and Montgomery Clift start their cattle drive, which will end in rancor with their climactic fistfight. *The Last Picture Show*, too, proceeds to a vicious fight—between Sonny and Duane over Jacy, who soon after weds Sonny, knowing her parents will have the marriage annulled before it is consummated. She does it to succor her wounded vanity on learning that Sonny has been sleeping with Ruth; stripping in front of the Wichita Falls smart set at a pool party is a tougher (if more exciting) trial for Jacy than eloping.

Jacy has been labeled a femme fatale by some critics. She is fickle, but like Sonny, she is also an innocent finding her way, a naïf, for all her manipulativeness, who defines herself in relation to men, including her mom's lover, the opportunistic oil driller Abilene (Clu Gulager)—an Oedipal revenge if ever there was one. Whatever her caprices, in 1971 many young women viewers would have cheered her readiness to experiment sexually with different men; Ruth's affair with Sonny is equally affirming, a better option than permanent lassitude and disappointment, if not exactly a feminist statement. Acting on desire is a salve for several characters' aimlessness, but not its every manifestation is healthy, or sane: Joe Bob Blanton (Barc Doyle), the religious kid, nearly molests a little girl. In the novel, McMurtry matter-of-factly describes the coition of teenage boys with animals; Bogdanovich necessarily drew the line at bestiality (though it is referred to in the film). The critic John Simon cited this omission and that of Lois's having sex with Sonny as examples

of the film's romanticization of the world of the novel. But these were discreet choices: Sonny's sleeping with Lois on-screen would have not only diluted the delicacy of his forlorn affair with Ruth but also cost the movie the touching conversation between Lois and Sonny when she recalls the only man who knew her worth. It is through Ruth's and Sam's upbraidings that Sonny learns about emotional responsibility and through Lois's acceptance of her past that he learns about the transience of love.

*The Last Picture Show* contrives to be both elegiac and brutally realistic. The deaths of Sam and Billy, Jacy's inconstancy (sickening to both Duane and Sonny), and the recognition that Sonny and Ruth will be unable to reignite their affair are as chilling as the northerners that sweep through Anarene. All that can be cherished are those fleeting moments of happiness contained in small intimacies. Ruth, newly radiant, wears Sonny's shirt after their second tryst (so much better than their noisy baptism by bedsprings). The kindhearted café waitress Genevieve (Eileen

Brennan) serves Sonny a healing cheeseburger. Sam, during the fishing trip, offers Sonny a roll-up as if they were a pair of Hawksian cowboys.

In that same interlude, Sam remembers bringing his girl to the tank more than twenty years before and swimming with her "without no bathin' suits." Memory confers a pleasure as precious in the present as the events being recalled. Dazzling, inventive, and trenchant though much of New Hollywood was—and abrasive and cynical too—nothing else it came up with matches Sam the Lion's faraway look as he dwells on his wild affair with his lost love. Fading out as he is, it's the last picture show in his mind's eye.

Graham Fuller has written about movies for *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *New York Times*, as well as for the Criterion Collection releases of *A Canterbury Tale*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, and *Walker*. Many of his articles and essays can be found online at [inalonelyplace.com](http://inalonelyplace.com).





# THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS A KILLING

BY MARK LE FANU

The New Jersey resort town of Atlantic City provides the backdrop for two distinctive films made at opposite ends of the seventies: Bob Rafelson's 1972 *The King of Marvin Gardens* and Louis Malle's *Atlantic City*, released in 1981. That decade saw tremendous changes in the fabric of the city—changes that one could say were prefigured in Rafelson's film, only to be confirmed, with documentary precision, by Malle's. For in 1976, in a bid to reverse an economic decline that had been advancing since the Second World War, the city got a state referendum passed to legalize gambling—making it only the second city in the United States with this distinction. The massive old hotels, with their upmarket names (the Shelburne, the



Marlborough Blenheim, the Ambassador, the Chalfonte, the Ritz-Carlton), were either demolished or turned into casinos. It is against the background of such an establishment, for example, that much of Malle's film unfolds: its heroine, a wannabe croupier played by Susan Sarandon, holds down a waitressing job in the oyster bar of one of these vast indoor palaces.

Similarly, although set in the city's pre-legalized-gaming days, *The King of Marvin Gardens* is also, in its way, about gambling. The film's principal protagonist, Jason Staebler (Bruce Dern), has established himself there, along with a pair of slightly ambiguous girlfriends, hoping to make a killing in the

property market. As the city has declined, the ownership of its real estate has loosened up, and there are chances for a shrewd businessman to carve out lucrative deals for himself—if he's up to it. Something about Jason, alas, tells us that he is no Donald Trump, the real-life property magnate whose fortune was based at the time on these very changes. There is piquancy in the fact—central, somehow, to the feel of Rafelson's film, and part of its curiously suggestive symbolism—that the different districts of Atlantic City, including Marvin Gardens, are known to the American public as squares in the game of Monopoly. Without nudging the viewer too much, the photography of László Kovács captures the city as a playing board. Massively there then, in their civic solidity and confidence, their erstwhile bourgeois prosperity, the famous hotels along the boardwalk are, from another perspective, simply theatrical facades—subprime Monopoly pieces to be bartered and thrown around between speculators with the lightness of a beach ball. What is the weight of the American dream? And what is its substance? These are some of the questions the movie touches on.

*The King of Marvin Gardens* emerged from an altogether excellent period in American filmmaking, a sort of interregnum between the decline of the old Hollywood studio system and the rise of the new. The second half of the seventies famously saw the birth of the modern blockbuster, with such movies as *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) leading the way. Yet the first half of the decade, before these changes were institutionalized, was full of quirky, individualistic movies that give you a much more compelling picture than the later films do of the reality of the time, in all its fascinating complexity. *The King of Marvin Gardens* is a key film in this context, taking its place alongside other important movies of the late sixties and early seventies that emerged from BBS (and its precursor, Raybert), the independent production company that Rafelson cofounded with industry insider Bert Schneider and Steve Blauner. It was the third film that Rafelson



There is an openness about the way the story unfolds that is altogether rare in the American mainstream. We are far from the realm of genre here; on the contrary, we are in the realm of character and psychology.



directed himself, after *Head* and *Five Easy Pieces*, and it comes near the end of the BBS story. Indeed, it might be better seen as part of another grouping, a 1970s Rafelson trilogy, along with *Five Easy Pieces* and the later, non-BBS *Stay Hungry* (1976). Together and in retrospect, these works are sufficiently different from one another not to feel repetitious but sufficiently similar to suggest a point of view, a take on the world, an artistic vision that has not always been credited to this director. All three films, of course, are “minor” works, in the sense that they were conceived of on an intimate scale, and produced on relatively low budgets. Yet what most strikes the viewer now, in addition to their delightful modesty, is the sheer range of sociological reference that Rafelson managed to pack into them. *Five Easy Pieces* is set in California and the Pacific Northwest; *The King of Marvin Gardens* thousands of miles across the country, on the Atlantic seaboard, in the depths of winter; while *Stay Hungry* takes us, with its own kind of uncanny precision, to the world of Alabama and the Deep South. They are “only” little films, as I have intimated, but in a way, the whole of America is present in them.

Like *Five Easy Pieces*, *The King of Marvin Gardens* portrays a conflictual relationship between two brothers of strikingly contrasting

personalities (much more centrally in the latter, of course). Yet whereas in *Five Easy Pieces* Jack Nicholson plays the bohemian half of the pair—the rebel, the ne’er-do-well—here he takes on the role of the introverted and uptight younger brother, whose task in life, psychically conditioned by the family background, is to rein in the anarchistic exuberance of his more worldly and enthusiastic elder sibling. As David Staebler—provincial talk-show host, would-be poet and philosopher of the nighttime airwaves—Nicholson delivers a more than adequate performance; when does he ever not? But the real fire in the film comes from Bruce Dern’s Jason. It is an amazing turn all around, and not only because of the intrinsic skill and energy of the actor. It is surely also because the movie itself is so well written. The dialogue, by Jacob Brackman, crackles with wit, and at the same time, structurally speaking, there is a sort of openness about the way the story unfolds that is altogether rare in the American mainstream. We are far from the realm of genre here; on the contrary, we are in the realm of character and psychology. That may seem a perverse way of putting it, for in a way the film is “just” a comedy, its ironic potential lying, as in comedy it always does, between what the characters may be hoping to get out of life and what—because of their various ineptitudes—they



will be forced in the end to put up with. Still, turned only a few degrees clockwise, this is also the recipe for tragedy, and *The King of Marvin Gardens* is indeed a dark, pessimistic movie. The idea that drives Jason is to buy a remote island in the Pacific, where he and his companions henceforth will be able to live the life of Riley—patently over the top as an ambition, and a fit subject, perhaps, for a satire on human pretensions. But though in one way the premise of the film is broad and extrovert, in another way it is subtle and Chekhovian. The movie encompasses these two possibilities of interpretation simultaneously, through an attention

to tone, to nuance, and to sudden shifts in psychological register that is altogether authoritative.

A word should be said about the women characters, and the actresses who play them, because they, too, are part of the charm of the film and a major gauge of what I am calling its subtlety and sophistication. There are two of them, older and younger, and they are in ambiguous relation to each other: Are they mother and daughter? Or are they in some curious way lovers? Both are attached to Jason, although throughout the film, our unpredictable hero seems to be trying to off-load the younger one onto his brother—as a reward, or a bribe, for cooperating with him. The wonderful Ellen Burstyn plays Sally, the older of the pair, while the role of the soubrette, Jessica, who turns out in fact to be Sally's stepdaughter, is taken by Julia Anne Robinson, an actress whose sole appearance in movies this was; two years later, she died tragically, in an apartment fire. I have come across comments that speak of her acting as wooden, but I have to say that, for me, she is an absolutely luminous presence—a fascinating counterpart, both in type and frail physical beauty, to the Susan Anspach character (the older brother's music-loving girlfriend) in *Five Easy Pieces*. One of the most memorable sequences of *The King of Marvin Gardens* is Jessica's tap dance under the spotlight during the private Miss America pageant that the group puts on to pass the time (there is a hint of *Waiting for Godot* in the plot of this film). Undoubtedly, Robinson walks the walk here. The whole masquerade is carried off with style and cheek—aided, to be sure, by the charm of a smiling Nicholson, acting as host of the ceremony, for this is one of the rare occasions when David can be seen to loosen up a bit, and to shed his habitual mask of tortured morosity.

Yes, he is a morose fellow, this literary younger brother of Jason's. Evidently, something has gone wrong in the past; he appears to have spent time in a psychiatric institution, though he is reluctant to come out and



admit it. (Typically, Jason is more forthcoming about the time that he has spent in jail.) The film, in general, seems to me to have a miraculously correct level of backstory, those little details that convince you the characters have come from somewhere—that they possessed lives before the film started, and that the particular episode you are looking at is set within the *durée* of a complete human life. This gets us back to the movie's subtlety and understatement. The corroborating details must be there, but they mustn't be too many, and they must be insinuated almost without viewers' noticing them—for instance, during the great quarrel that erupts when the group are packing their bags to leave the hotel, Jason holds in his hands a couple of miniature athletic trophies, testimony to some valued physical prowess of his youth.

And here one should say something about Rafelson as craftsman. Like the other two films in the trilogy, *The King of Marvin Gardens* is very confidently edited—which is perhaps only another way of saying it is very confidently shot. Rafelson knows exactly how to mount a scene, to move seamlessly from medium shot to close-up, or to hold on a particular framing for emphasis; nor does he forget to provide us, when necessary, with those little, but vital, silent inserts (what the French call *temps morts*) that go to make a film's cadence and thoughtfulness. One could take the scene where the band of parading majorettes suddenly scatters at the sound of a whistle, and the camera moves back into extreme long shot to reveal, like an impressionist painting, the scurrying figures against the backdrop of the boardwalk and the icy wintry ocean. Or the moment at which, having descended from the cable ride above the city, David is briefly left on his own, without his brother. No dialogue here is necessary, only the clanking of the cable machinery in the background. David looks upward and frowns. Immediately, there is a communicated sense of interiority, of reflection, of melancholy that is absolutely part of the movie's distinctiveness.

It happens that Bob Rafelson was the first American movie director this writer addressed himself to professionally when starting out as a young film critic in the seventies. Up until that time, my main interest had been in European art-house cinema—in a way, it still is. But where film is concerned, American cinema can never be ignored; it is so obviously at the center of all reflection on the art. What strongly drew me to these three movies in general, and to *The King of Marvin Gardens* in particular, was the sense communicated of personal, existentialist freedom. On the surface, this may seem paradoxical, because two of the films, after all—*Five Easy Pieces* and this one—resolve themselves in impasse and violence. But in another way, it isn't: Rafelson's films speak up for the idea that in American society, everyone is entitled to invent themselves. The dream, so to speak, is always valid—even if it crashes in flames. Such a view of life seemed to me, back in the seventies, very different from the British

position, where, traditionally, the class you are born into tends to be the one you remain in. Rafelson's attitude toward the idea of self-invention, of “living the dream,” of escaping from class, struck me then—and still does—as tremendously open and democratic. The trilogy of movies he came up with may be characterized as extraordinarily nonjudgmental. Here are these interesting people, they seem to say. Take them for what they are. Enjoy (as well as their melancholy) their uncontrollable zest for life. They are the crooked timber of humanity.

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# One Big Real Place: BBS from Head to Hearts

**BY J. HOBERMAN**

"What we need are good old American—and that's not to be confused with European—Art Films." So declared the then twenty-nine-year-old beatnik Method actor Dennis Hopper in an unpublished 1965 manifesto. "The whole damn country's one big real place to utilize and film, and God's a great gaffer!"

Less than three years later, Hopper was himself out in America, shooting a biker art film provisionally titled *The Losers*. American International Pictures, the home of fast, cheap, insouciantly exploitative horror, beach party, biker, and now crazy hippie flicks, had nixed the notion of a "modern" western in which a pair of motorcycle dudes

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make a major dope score, then ride cross-country to retire on a Florida orange farm, only to be shot down—bang, like in the war—by a couple of redneck poachers. But then Hopper and his partner, twenty-eight-year-old AIP youth star Peter Fonda, secured the backing of Hollywood's hippest producers, Bob Rafelson and Bert Schneider.

Rafelson and Schneider were both thirty-five, well connected, and already riding the youth wave, albeit in television. The pair had invented the hugely popular, Emmy Award-winning made-for-TV band the Monkees, and their outfit, Raybert, was set to perpetrate the ultimate goof, a Monkees vehicle that would eventually be called *Head*.

Schneider would produce, and Rafelson would direct, from a script he wrote with another Hollywood hipster, B-movie actor Jack Nicholson, thirty. Their screenplay would be even more free-associative than the hit LSD adventure Nicholson had recently written for AIP, *The Trip* (1967)—directed by Roger Corman and featuring Fonda in the lead, with Hopper playing a demonic Sunset Boulevard acid guru. Nicholson was reunited with Fonda and Hopper when Schneider assigned him to keep an eye on *Easy Rider* (as *The Losers* was renamed by scriptwriter Terry Southern).

Hopper was not the only aspiring filmmaker who saw himself as a nascent auteur or as part of an American New Wave. Hollywood may have been a sclerotic dinosaur, but inspired in equal measure by European cineastes and America's dharma bums, other eager-beaver bohemians were gnawing away at the system—hanging out at pop art gallery shows and beatnik poetry readings, digging Dylan and the Doors, studying the Method, smoking pot, and finding work at AIP. Writer-producer-actor Nicholson was one of the most versatile of these, and something of a house genius at Raybert, which, with the addition of Schneider's childhood friend Steven Blauner, would soon become BBS—providing a home for other AIP veterans, including directors Peter Bogdanovich and

Henry Jaglom, actors Karen Black and Bruce Dern, screenwriter Carole Eastman, and cameraman László Kovács.

Over the next half dozen years, this group would create six more features that, in their engagement with the present moment, determination to break free of the movie-industry establishment, commitment to new forms of naturalism, and reckless, movie-intoxicated ambition, embodied the spirit of a New Hollywood. *Something was happening, and they thought they knew what it was . . .* pop music, pop alienation, a yearning for roots, the last frontier, casual sex, sudden death, crazy kids, Vietnam.

BBS movies, although not always hits, were never less than events, engaging both audiences and a new generation of passionate critics. The discourse—as articulated by serious cinephiles like Pauline Kael and Andrew Sarris, as well as their younger colleagues around the country—was essentially about freedom. What were movies now, what could they be? Where was America going, where should it go? Some BBS protagonists felt liberated from the old constraints; others struggled to achieve that state. It was beautiful, as Peter Fonda's Captain America recognized in *Easy Rider*, and yet impossible.

Each BBS production celebrated the triumph of its own coming into existence—a triumph, in part, because the movies were themselves so excitingly downbeat, not least in their opposition to Hollywood at that time. Indeed, in film after film, BBS protagonists would go down to defeat. Casualties of the not altogether understood “cultural revolution” happening around them, these characters typically carried the seeds of their own destruction—as did BBS itself, along with the counterculture with which its filmmakers identified.

In early '68, however, anything seemed possible. Schneider and Rafelson were itching to join the party when *Head* and *Easy Rider* both

went into production, in mid-February. And whether or not God was a-gaffing, America had never been crazier.

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As embodied by Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty (and rendered by Robert Rauschenberg), the Righteous Outlaws Bonnie and Clyde made the cover of *Time* magazine just as 1967 ended and American casualties in the now three-year-long war in Vietnam surpassed those suffered in Korea. The Vietcong launched their Tet Offensive, and America's most trusted TV newsman, Walter Cronkite, returned from Nam to declare the war a "stalemate." B-52s pounded the hills around the marine base at Khe Sanh, seeking to bury the VC under more explosives than had ever been dropped in the history of mankind.

Outsiders were in: antiwar senator Eugene McCarthy nearly won the New Hampshire primary, and President Lyndon Johnson declared that he would not run for reelection. Martyrs proliferated: Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April, and two months later, so was peace candidate Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Sam Peckinpah had gone to Mexico to shoot *The Wild Bunch*; AIP's current release, *Wild in the Streets*, had a fascist rock star taking over the country. The hippie musical *Hair* opened on Broadway—as did John Wayne's ode to the war *The Green Berets*. SDS militants occupied Columbia University and French students battled the cops in Paris, while sympathetic filmmakers shut down the Cannes Film Festival.

Rafelson edited his footage for *Head* and Hopper struggled with his for *Easy Rider* as Russian tanks rumbled into Prague and the Democratic convention erupted into police-state madness in Chicago. A survey published that fall in *Fortune* magazine found a million kids identifying themselves with the New Left, but Twentieth Century Fox studio boss

Darryl F. Zanuck didn't need a weatherman to know which way the wind was blowing: Fox was making a Che Guevara biopic with a budget that dwarfed the cost of the actual Cuban Revolution. Electoral chaos loomed. Thanks to Alabama governor George Wallace's third-party challenge, the presidential election seemed headed for the House of Representatives . . .

Hopper was still pondering his footage when Richard Nixon was elected president. One day later, after plastering New York with enigmatic posters, Rafelson and Schneider opened *Head*.

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As *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) had done for the infinitely more talented Beatles, *Head* provided an opportunity for the Monkees—Micky Dolenz, Davy Jones, Michael Nesmith, Peter Tork—to cavort, caper, cutely sulk, and occasionally perform, with more than a bit of ironic self-awareness, for screaming mobs of fourteen-year-old fans. *Head* was more fragmentary and surreal than its ostensive model, however, and was blatantly deflationary. The Monkees were scarcely more than a textual effect in a nonstop barrage of wacky sight gags and pop culture references.

Rather than promote the "Prefab Four," *Head* evoked that particular landscape that had only recently come to be called the Media, the better to debunk the blatant media construct of the Monkees themselves. The Monkees wander from one movie genre to another while, as in a Warner Bros. cartoon, backdrops are exposed as backdrops and sets are revealed to be sets. *Head* quoted or travestied the well-televised movies of the forties (*Golden Boy*, *Sahara*, *Gilda*) while providing cameos for a déclassé, near freakish assortment of celebrities, including Mouseketeer turned beach bunny Annette Funicello, defeated world heavyweight champ Sonny Liston, topless dancer Carol Doda, and female impersonator T. C. Jones. Some stars, mainly California governor Ronald Reagan and



gossip columnist Rona Barrett, are shown only as TV images. Others are treated as icons. An outsize Coca-Cola vending machine materializes in the desert like one of Stanley Kubrick's monoliths, while an even more colossal Victor Mature appears as a laughing giant, first cousin to the Rex Ingram jinni who towered over Sabu in one of Rafelson's favorite movies, *The Thief of Bagdad*—the Monkees reduced to flecks of dandruff on his scalp.

Adding to the assault, everything was tricked out with a panoply of gimmicky effects and interspersed with used-car spots, cartoon clips,

and, most outrageously, newsreel footage of the Vietnam War. The repeated use of the notorious image of a VC captive being executed by Saigon's chief of police struck some viewers as particularly egregious. "The movie might have worked for bored kids at kiddie matinees, but the filmmakers got ambitious," wrote Pauline Kael, elevated by her five-thousand-word defense of *Bonnie and Clyde* to the job of *New Yorker* critic and leading advocate for a New Hollywood—if not yet ready for *Head*. "The by now standard stuff of girls squealing as pop idols perform is not even convincing when they're squealing for the Monkees, and when this is intercut with documentary footage of the suffering and horror of war, as if to comment on the shallowness of what the filmmakers are manufacturing and packaging and desperately trying to sell, the doubling up of greed and pretensions to depth is enough to make even a pinhead walk out." (Which the critic evidently did.)

At least the Monkees were honestly ersatz—and with the exception of the far more meretriciously fake and no less pop-idol-driven *Green Berets*, no Hollywood movie produced during the Vietnam War referenced that war more than *Head*.

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America was also, as suggested by *Head*, One Fake Place. The first BBS production was a flop. But *Easy Rider*, produced for under \$400,000 and returning its cost one hundred times over in its first release, was one of the greatest financial coups in Hollywood history.

Both within Hollywood and without, *Easy Rider* presented itself as a generational statement. While *Head* parodied the straight media, *Easy Rider* reveled in countercultural values—not just the sacraments of drugs, sex, and rock and roll, but also the *I Ching*, hippie communes, guerrilla theater, doing your own thing, the brown rice millenarianism that

predicted the impending collapse of urban civilization, when long-haired freaks would be fighting for their lives against the killer redneck straights.

Successors to the Wild One and the Rebel Without a Cause, Bonnie and Clyde were Righteous Outlaws; Fonda's narcissistic, cool-bordering-on-catatonic Captain America and Hopper's hyperzonked, free-form, babbling Billy were something else. These guys were freaks and heads, semiotic warriors and electric cowboys, True Americans and Losers, Beautiful Losers.

*Easy Rider* decried Amerikkka but celebrated American freedom. Hopper served up Jack Kerouac's Beat generation wanderlust and Robert Frank's on-the-road landscape with a self-consciously artistic, European-inflected camera. He and cinematographer László Kovács developed a widely imitated style, based on giant close-ups, sudden zooms, leisurely rack focusing, and ecstatic sunbursts. Hopper's sense of filmmaking also drew on American underground filmmakers (Kenneth Anger's wall-to-wall real rock music in *Scorpio Rising*, Bruce Conner's fragmentary editing).

The use of strobe flash-forwards to signify scene transitions failed to catch on, but *Easy Rider*'s rock-scored lyrical interludes—meant to evoke the experience of bombing down the highway with the car radio blasting, and typically used in stoned celebration of the nation's empty plenitude—became the hallmark of Hollywood hipness.

As in the heyday of Haight-Ashbury, everyone showed up in costume. Hopper dressed as Wild Bill Hickok, Fonda wore leather pants and the American flag; the women they encounter seemed modeled on Pocahontas or Belle Starr's fancy gals. Phil Spector pretends to be a coke dealer, a stray hitchhiker is AWOL from Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. And yet *Easy Rider* was also marked by a concern with authenticity—as *Head* had been, at least in acknowledging its

own phoniness. This desire to let it all hang out and tell it like it is was, Teresa Grimes would note some years later in a piece for *Movie* magazine, the defining BBS characteristic (as prophesied by Hopper): "A crucial feature of the BBS ethos was to take filmmaking out of the studio into the 'real America,' so that the film could become a response to an actual reality 'out there.'"

Certainly, that's how a sizable chunk of the audience saw (or wanted to see) *Easy Rider*. Defending the movie in the *New York Times*, Village Voice rock critic Richard Goldstein called it "a travel poster for the new America." (And yet, paraphrasing a current Simon and Garfunkel ballad, the *Easy Rider* ad announced, "A man went looking for America and couldn't find it anywhere.") Although devoid of political analysis beyond the assumption that, by waving their freak flags high in the American South, its martyred protagonists were not just Easy but Freedom Riders, the movie articulated a generalized sense of failure.

"You know, this used to be a hell of a good country," Nicholson muses at one point. "I can't understand what's gone wrong with it." It was nothing less than the BBS motto.

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*Easy Rider* provided both the means and a road map for subsequent Schneider-Rafelson productions. They had trumped Hollywood and could exult in their freedom. Using their profits from the Monkees, Schneider and Rafelson had put up the roughly \$350,000 to finance *Easy Rider*, with Columbia Pictures releasing, as it had with *Head*. Shortly before *Easy Rider* opened in July 1969, Blauner joined the firm to handle distribution, and Raybert became BBS. In the wake of *Easy Rider*'s considerable success, BBS negotiated a six-picture deal with Columbia; BBS bought the right of final cut with the stipulation that the partners



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would cover all costs over a million dollars per picture, and BBS would split the net with Columbia fifty-fifty.

Before the year of *Easy Rider* was out, BBS had bought its own four-story office building, off of the Columbia lot. According to New Hollywood chronicler Peter Biskind, 933 North La Brea would soon be the epicenter of Hollywood hip, and "BBS quickly became a hangout for a ragtag band of filmmakers and radicals of various stripes." It even inspired a rival outfit within the system: Ned Tannen now headed a youth film unit at Universal, set to produce new films directed by Hopper and Fonda, as well as Nicholson's old pal Monte Hellman. "We didn't have any burning ambition or slogan to change Hollywood," Rafelson would tell the *Los Angeles Press* around the time that *Five Easy Pieces*, the first Columbia-financed BBS release, opened. "We just knew there was a way to do something that was groovier than the way it had been done."

Made for under \$900,000, in forty-one days, during the winter of 1970, *Five Easy Pieces* was as freewheeling, in its way, as *Easy Rider*—anecdotal, shot in sequence, and so open-ended that director Rafelson didn't decide on which of the three possible last scenes he would use until the day the picture wrapped. Nicholson was the star, but the landscape was paramount—in this case, cinematographer Kovács lavished his attention on the bowling alleys, trailer parks, gas stations, diners, and cheap motels that, however familiar from Robert Frank's midfifties photographs, had rarely been seen in American movies.

The script was by Nicholson's protégée Carole Eastman, who had written 1967's *The Shooting* (one of the two low-budget Hellman-directed westerns that Nicholson had produced in the midsixties) and Jerry Schatzberg's 1970 *Puzzle of a Downfall Child* (all under the name Adrien Joyce). Eastman drew on a story by Rafelson—and perhaps on Rafelson's sense of himself. (Not named Bobby for nothing, the protagonist

is the sort of inveterate upper-middle-class rebel that the director told interviewers he had himself been.) In some respects, the movie suggested an American version of François Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960): existentially traumatized oil rigger Bobby Dupea is a trained classical pianist in flight from his past.

As *Five Easy Pieces* elaborated on the *Easy Rider* trip, it naturalized Head's structure. The movie is predicated on non sequitur (Bobby playing Chopin on a flatbed truck, or abruptly attacking his peckerwood buddy: "Keep on telling me about the good life, Elton, because it makes me puke") and shock cuts (a bowling ball crashing down, the camera swirling around Bobby and a female partner engaged in strenuous motel room sex). Bobby's girlfriend, Rayette Dipesto, played by Karen Black, is pregnant, but that is mentioned only once, almost in passing, while, incorporating a personal anecdote she told Rafelson, Sally Struthers (Bobby's pickup, and soon to achieve TV stardom as Archie Bunker's daughter) gets a long close-up solo recounting the explanation she was given as a child for how girls get dimples.

Creating, rather than following, fashion, *Five Easy Pieces* appeared well into Nixon time. By September 1970, America had lived through the invasion of Cambodia, the ensuing massacres at Kent State and Jackson State, the ongoing demonization of the counterculture, and, as embodied by the eponymous protagonist of the independent sensation *Joe*, the ascension of the hardhat. Suddenly, in a neat turn of the pop culture dialectic, here was Nicholson, *Easy Rider*'s hippie straight, as something new: a long-haired hardhat, a middle-class dropout, working on an oil rig and shacked up with a big-haired, dim-witted, warmhearted, country-lovin' truck stop waitress, the living embodiment of the Tammy Wynette songs that, in an inspired audio analogue to the movie's American landscape, Rafelson took for his soundtrack.

Despite, or perhaps because of, having it both ways—ridiculing Rayette while sentimentalizing her, mocking the snobbery of Bobby's highbrow family even as it advanced the film's own artistic ambitions—*Five Easy Pieces* appeared as a genuine American Art Film. Premiered at the 1970 New York Film Festival, it was a critical sensation. Writing in *Esquire*, Jacob Brackman marveled at the movie's "series of astonishing fake-outs," and *Life* critic Richard Schickel noted that the movie "totally reverses our cinematic expectations." *Variety* went even further, maintaining that with its "straightforward, gimmickless footage," "timeless theme," "subtly conceived performances," and "strictly novelistic approach," *Five Easy Pieces* flouted "virtually all of the current filmmaking trends." The New York Film Critics Circle voted it the year's best picture, nearly two to one over Ingmar Bergman's *The Passion of Anna* (in some ways its European equivalent). Rafelson edged out Federico Fellini for best director; Black overwhelmingly won best supporting actress, garnering more than twice the votes of her nearest rival, French actress Françoise Fabian (star of *My Night at Maud's*). The Academy acknowledged *Five Easy Pieces* with Oscar nominations for best picture, actor, supporting actress, and original screenplay.

Moreover, Nicholson and Black became contemporary icons. (Nicholson was the fourth-ranked Star of Tomorrow for 1970; Black was named second in 1971.) *Five Easy Pieces* established the essential Jack Nicholson persona—the wild man outbursts and wise guy attitude, the arched eyebrow, and the devastating put-down. Writing in *Cue*, William Wolf compared Nicholson to tormented forties street kid John Garfield, "the guy who can't fit into life's groove." But where Garfield was a working-class hero, Nicholson was more a faux-working-class antihero, not to mention a sincere cynic and alienated bon vivant—less a nouveau Garfield than a degenerate Clark Gable.

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Once upon a time, Pauline Kael would note in 1971, “the generally tawdry films we saw week after week contributed to our national identity—such as it was. Now only the counterculture uses movies (and only a few, key movies) this way—for new heroes, new styles, new attitudes.”

The year following *Five Easy Pieces* brought a number of such figures—the titular protagonists of *El Topo*, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, and *Billy Jack*—as well as the flowering of the hippie western (Fonda's *The Hired Hand*, Hopper's *The Last Movie*, Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*). But the counterculture was hardly Hollywood's only audience. That same year after *Five Easy Pieces*'s apotheosis, Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry trumped Nicholson's Hardhat Longhair as a Middle American culture hero.

Still, Bobby Dupea was the quintessential BBS protagonist—alienated, wounded, charismatic, in flight from or defeated by a corrupt, violent, morally bankrupt America. It was a part Nicholson would continue to play on the screen (and in life) for years to come. His subsequent films—*Carnal Knowledge* (1971), *The Last Detail* (1973), *Chinatown* (1974), and *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)—would establish him as Hollywood's most successful maverick, acting out and loving it. The March 27, 1971, issue of *Life* described “Happy Jack” auditioning actresses for the nude scene in his upcoming directorial debut, produced by BBS and adapted from Jeremy Larner's novel *Drive, He Said*.

Written in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and published in late 1964, Larner's tale of a disaffected college basketball player brought the twenty-seven-year-old author the ten-thousand-dollar Delta Prize for a first novel. The book was prescient enough to include an LSD trip, but much in student life had changed—or rather, intensified—in the subsequent half dozen years. Larner and Nicholson revised the novel's

scenario to include college radicals, guerrilla theater, draft physicals, and an extreme instance of hippie madness, in addition to the affair between the conflicted jock (twenty-three-year-old William Tepper, in his first and, for more than a decade, last movie role) and a sexually wanton faculty wife (Karen Black).

Appearing a year after the college films released in the wake of Kent State (*Getting Straight*, *The Strawberry Statement*, *R.P.M.*, *The Revolutionary*), *Drive, He Said* was distinguished by its comic couplings, copious nudity, and kinetic basketball games (Nicholson was a fan). The movie had a haphazard quality that harked back to Brian De Palma's anarchic indies of the late sixties, *Greetings* and *Hi Mom!*. Its most entertainingly inflammatory scenes involve the mad campus revolutionary played by Michael Margotta, twenty-five, an Actors Studio grad featured in 1968's *Wild in the Streets*.

*Drive, He Said* premiered at Cannes and, according to the *New York Times*, “set off the [festival's] most violently negative reaction . . . As the lights came up, the people hooted, screamed, and whistled. Some got to their feet and waved indignant fists toward where Nicholson and his two actors, William Tepper and Michael Margotta, were seated.” Although the *Times* correspondent, Cynthia Grenier, attributed this audience antipathy to “the thoroughly unglamorous handling of the sex scenes,” the anarchic politics—notably the climactic freak-out, in which the Margotta character liberates the specimens in the campus science lab—were a more likely factor. (The prizewinners that year included two popular-front myths, Bo Widerberg's *Joe Hill* and Giuliano Montaldo's *Sacco & Vanzetti*, and three more politically coherent American movies, Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, Miloš Forman's *Taking Off*, and Jerry Schatzberg's *The Panic in Needle Park*.)



The domestic reaction was mixed when *Drive, He Said* opened a month later, with Columbia having bargained the movie's initial X rating down to an R. In a generally unfavorable review, the film critic for the *Augur*, an underground newspaper published in Eugene, Oregon (where much of *Drive, He Said* was shot), complained that he had not been prepared for "such perversion" from "the counterculture's hero, Jack Nicholson." Make that Hollywood's counterculture hero: *Newsweek* critic Paul D. Zimmerman praised *Drive, He Said's* "brilliant editing," and credited the director's sensibility: "This is Nicholson's film, informed

everywhere by his irreverence, honesty, and energy." Jacob Brackman (like Zimmerman, an aspiring screenwriter; he would collaborate with Rafelson on the screenplay for *The King of Marvin Gardens*) published a somewhat tortuous defense in *Esquire*: *Drive, He Said* was "intensely real, although in an entirely nondocumentary way, [and hence] likely to be mistaken for a bad movie." The *New York Times*'s Vincent Canby considered the performances "touched with the kind of unexpected sensibility and decency that are rare in most movies of this genre," associating this quality with Nicholson's own performances in *Easy Rider* and *Five Easy Pieces*.

Although *Drive, He Said* did poorly at the box office, its failure was eclipsed by the summer of flops suffered by Universal—*Two-Lane Blacktop*, *The Hired Hand*, and, most dramatically, *The Last Movie*—as well as the derisive incomprehension that greeted Henry Jaglom's *A Safe Place* when it was shown that fall at a scaled-down New York Film Festival. *Variety* reported that *A Safe Place* was the festival's "most audience-dividing feature . . . It drew walkouts, boos, and fervently defensive partisan applause. Afterwards, during a long onstage panel discussion, most of the audience remained and again divided on the film and its author-director . . . Seldom has as much emotion been expended at a preview of a film so many people declared aloud they could not understand."

That reaction was not surprising, given that *A Safe Place* was essentially nonnarrative—the most radical experiment that BBS would produce after *Head*. Jaglom, who had gone to summer camp with Bert Schneider, was a self-described hyphenate. He'd had some experience in New York theater prior to going west, where he helped edit *Easy Rider* and played a theater professor in *Drive, He Said*. Given his shot to make a movie, Jaglom adapted *A Safe Place*—described in press

notes as “autobiographical to a rather unusual extent”—from his play *The Uncommon Denominator*, which he had directed and appeared in when it was performed as an improvised off-Broadway revue in 1963. Edited from fifty hours of footage, *A Safe Place* was an actor-driven, star-studded production, featuring not only Nicholson but also Tuesday Weld (in a role created onstage by Karen Black) and Orson Welles.

The Weld character, alternately known as Susan and Noah, spends time in Jaglom’s childhood apartment, a treasure trove of postimpressionist paintings on Central Park West. Rather than countercultural rock anthems, *A Safe Place* reiterates a series of pop standards (“I’m Old-Fashioned,” “As Time Goes By,” “La mer,” “Someone to Watch Over Me”). A witchy, possibly schizophrenic, hippie kook, Weld first appears to be channeling Jean Seberg in *Lilith*. “When I was a little girl, I flew,” she insists throughout. Her hapless suitor (Jaglom’s stage role, taken in the film by Philip Proctor, a longtime member of the Firesign Theatre) describes her as “pretty, sad, and weirder than hell.”

After a while, Weld doesn’t seem to be acting so much as being—*A Safe Place* is the Warhol Factory screen test she never had. Not so Welles, who appears as a stage magician with an intermittent stage Yiddish accent, performing tricks with a silver ball in Central Park—or is it in the Weld character’s mind? (Welles is the artiste; he would repay the compliment after a fashion by casting Jaglom as a young director in his unfinished Hollywood melodrama *The Other Side of the Wind*.)

The repetition and fractured chronology go well beyond the flash-forwards that punctuate *Easy Rider*; the unmatched performances and raw sense of a prolonged acting exercise evoke John Cassavetes’ *Shadows*. “There are three scenes in *A Safe Place* that remain intact from the original script,” Weld told the *New York Times*. “All the rest is either improvisation or was thought up or written right there, at the moment,

or that morning.” Lengthy, apparently improvised riffs—including a long dream monologue delivered by Gwen Welles—are intercut with Orson Welles’s magic tricks, ultimately giving way to the sudden introduction of a devilish Nicholson as another ghost from Weld’s past. Weld does manage to catch the magic ball but, maintaining the unbroken succession of cataclysmic BBS endings, apparently drowns herself in a bubble bath.

Jaglom would attempt to explain himself in “The Making of an Anti-Movie or Learning How to Fly,” a prose poem manifesto published in the underground biweekly *Changes*, while Richard Corliss, a member of the New York Film Festival selection committee, defended *A Safe Place* in the *Village Voice* as “exactly the kind of film—experimental, audacious, demanding, arrogant, and vulnerable—which the festival exists to encourage.”

Corliss suggested that audiences preferred overtly political experiments like Dušan Makavejev’s *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, also shown in the festival that year, but it was clear that critics and audiences alike were much more taken by the other BBS offering at the event: *The Last Picture Show*.

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Peter Bogdanovich was the American director whose career path most closely approximated those of the French New Wave filmmakers. A raging cinephile, he published auteurist film journalism in periodicals ranging from *Film Culture* and the *Village Voice* to *Esquire*, wrote film notes for the *New Yorker* Theatre, and in 1964, at age twenty-five, cocurated the Museum of Modern Art’s epochal Alfred Hitchcock retrospective.

Relocating to Hollywood, Bogdanovich apprenticed himself to Roger Corman at AIP, where he reedited a Soviet sci-fi film into *Voyage to the Planet of the Prehistoric Women* (released in 1968) and spent six months



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working on Corman's *The Wild Angels* (1966), scouting locations and rewriting the script. (He would also take credit for casting Peter Fonda in the lead.) As a reward, Corman gave him a chance to direct a low-budget drive-in flick, *Targets* (1968), which, benefiting from a day's work owed AIP by Boris Karloff and inspired by the case of the 1966 University of Texas sniper, was enriched with film references and topical sensationalism.

Rafelson saw *Targets* and offered to produce Bogdanovich's next movie. Schneider was dubious (according to Biskind, Bogdanovich struck him as boringly straight), but ultimately they all agreed on an adaptation of Larry McMurtry's 1966 novel *The Last Picture Show*, a coming-of-age story set during the Korean War in a shabby, mean-spirited Texas town. The subject was far from Bogdanovich's experience—and perhaps even his interests—but as his then wife, production designer Polly Platt, explained, their strategy was to treat the novel as "the French would have made it, where these weird American sexual mores could be investigated." But unlike the French (and as straight as Schneider had suspected), Bogdanovich also planned to make the movie as a knowing pastiche of classic postwar Hollywood—a true Good Old American Art Film! *The Last Picture Show* was even shot in black and white; Bogdanovich picked veteran cinematographer Robert Surtees based on the sharpness and clarity of his work on *Intruder in the Dust* (shot on location in Oxford, Mississippi, twenty-two years before).

Filming began in October 1970, in Archer City, the Texas town where McMurtry had grown up. Bogdanovich's journalistic acumen may be deduced from the production stories that appeared. Fellow auteurist Martin Rubin published a lengthy report in the *Village Voice*; former Warhol associate Donald Chase visited the set on behalf of the hip monthly *Show*. Most remarkably, Grover Lewis—a childhood pal of McMurtry's with a small role in the movie—published a ten-thousand-

word piece that alerted the readers of *Rolling Stone* to the movie's existence months before it opened.

*Rolling Stone's* interest was not unfounded. Predicated on an anecdotal series of sexual initiations, *The Last Picture Show* was, no less than *Easy Rider* and *Drive, He Said*, a youth film—albeit pre-Elvis and without an avatar of James Dean. Moreover, set in a bleak, stultifying backwater, *The Last Picture Show* projected that now trademark BBS sense of failure ("Nothing's really been right since Sam the Lion died"), and even a measure of existential angst. Despite its all-American subject matter, the movie was closer to Antonioni than John Ford or Howard Hawks.

With its wide-open spaces, small dusty towns, and cast of lunch counter waitresses, drugstore cowboys, and hardhat oil riggers, *The Last Picture Show* shared an echt American iconography with *Five Easy Pieces* and *Easy Rider*—but with a difference. Where *Easy Rider* deployed Steppenwolf and Jimi Hendrix and *Five Easy Pieces* drew on Tammy Wynette, *The Last Picture Show* provided wall-to-wall Hank Williams. Full of period artifacts (paperbacks, magazines, movie posters), Bogdanovich's town is a museum of 1951-ness (with Korea standing in for Vietnam). Movies are, of course, the privileged artifact, as embodied by veteran western actor Ben Johnson's central role and narrative function as the town's heart, Sam the Lion.

Countless movies followed *Bonnie and Clyde* into ultraviolence; *The Last Picture Show* perfected something else that film had introduced, a retro tendency. (As noted a few years later by Mitchell S. Cohen, in his *Take One* analysis of BBS, *The Last Picture Show* and *A Safe Place* were "flip sides of the nostalgia coin. One is fearlessly obscure, the other structurally classical, both deal with the value of dwelling on the past.") In the long run, *The Last Picture Show* would prove nearly as influential as *Easy Rider*; in the short run, it was nearly as profitable and even

more favorably received (including getting eight Oscar nominations—for picture, director, cinematography, adapted screenplay, and two each for supporting actor and supporting actress; both Ben Johnson and Cloris Leachman won). The relief was palpable at BBS—not to mention Columbia, which was suffering greater losses than any other studio in Hollywood.

Vincent Canby hailed *The Last Picture Show* in the *New York Times* as "an adventure in rediscovery—of a very decent, straightforward kind of movie, as well as of—and I rather hesitate to use such a square phrase—human values." Andrew Sarris, Bogdanovich's senior partner in the Americanization of French auteurism, wondered, "Who would have thought a few years back that in 1971 Peter Bogdanovich would be traveling first-class on the express train of film history while Dennis Hopper was bumming a ride on a freight train headed for oblivion?" (Hopper's boldly experimental, near identically titled fiasco *The Last Movie* provided a handy foil for the Bogdanovich triumph.)

Newsweek's Paul D. Zimmerman took his praise to the limit, beginning his review with the declaration that *The Last Picture Show* was a masterpiece, and "not merely the best American movie of a rather dreary year [but] the most impressive work by a young American director since *Citizen Kane*." It's possible that *The Last Picture Show* received better notices than any American movie between *Gone with the Wind* and *The Godfather*. Even the finicky *New Leader* critic John Simon allowed that, although an example of "cinematheque direction" (by which he meant derivative pastiche), it was "not bad by current standards."

Some saw *The Last Picture Show* as fulfilling their critical position. Jonas Mekas, who had published Bogdanovich in *Film Culture*, took a week off from promoting the avant-garde to hail *The Last Picture Show* as "a perfectly beautiful movie" and the epitome of intelligent

"neoclassicism." Mekas's *Village Voice* colleague Sarris, who wrote on this "extraordinarily exhilarating spectacle" at considerable length in those pages, saw *The Last Picture Show* as a triumph for auteurism, crowing that Bogdanovich had "won over many of his erstwhile enemies by providing them with an emotional experience they did not anticipate from a registered [auteurist]."

Sarris was undoubtedly thinking of Pauline Kael, whose positive review of *The Last Picture Show* is fascinatingly ambivalent: "I want to praise a movie that is in some ways, and good ways, very old-fashioned," she wrote, while immediately warning that her "praise for what will probably turn out to be a huge success with both critics and audiences [shouldn't be] interpreted as a put-down of the talented people whose movies have been chaotic disasters . . . Fiascos like *Drive, He Said* weren't dead, in the way that fiascos like *The Last Run* were. And now Bogdanovich has made a movie for everybody—not just the *Airport* audience but the youth audience and the educated older audience, too. The danger is that *The Last Picture Show* . . . the kind of straightforward, involving, narrative picture that doesn't often get produced anymore—will turn into a bludgeon to beat other filmmakers with."

And that, in essence, is what happened with BBS's next project, *The King of Marvin Gardens*.

\*

*The King of Marvin Gardens* was in production from Thanksgiving 1971 into the winter of *Dirty Harry*, with Columbia Pictures on the brink of disaster. (The studio finished the year \$29 million in the red.) Appropriately, the movie was shot, by Kovács, in off-season (and pre-legalized-gambling) Atlantic City, a desolate beach-resort town suggesting nothing so much as a lunar Santa Monica.

In addition to its location, *The King of Marvin Gardens* would end up showcasing Nicholson's range. He was cast against type as David Staebler, an uptight, near autistic radio monologuist, while Bruce Dern was given what would normally have been the Nicholson role, playing David's brother, Jason, a comic, megalomaniacal hustler with a head full of outsize dreams and a dangerous connection to the mob. The supporting, Karen Black-ish female role was split between Ellen Burstyn and neophyte Julia Anne Robinson, as Jason's two women.

Stylistically, *The King of Marvin Gardens* is the most restrained of any BBS production, with hardly any music to leaven the downbeat mood. (The sole musical interlude is an instance of incidental surrealism, when the brothers and their girls camp on the idea of Miss America—a sort of cargo-cult version of *Head*.) Although not always convincing in its specifics, the movie conveys a powerful sense of place—and an even stronger sense of placelessness. If *Five Easy Pieces* suggested a corn-fed, rowdy sort of Ingmar Bergman movie, *The King of Marvin Gardens* had the quality of star-spangled early Antonioni. (The maestro's own American movie, *Zabriskie Point*, released two years earlier—which, not coincidentally, used BBS offices for its preproduction—was considerably more flamboyant.)

Premiered at the 1972 New York Film Festival and opening shortly thereafter, *The King of Marvin Gardens* was poorly received, its ambition saluted by only a few critics. Jay Cocks wrote in *Time* that while the film was less successful than *Five Easy Pieces*, it was in many ways a "more interesting and certainly more daring" movie. In the dispirited aftermath of the Christmas bombings, with Washington preparing for Nixon's second inauguration, the *New York Times* reported that *The King of Marvin Gardens* had received one favorable notice, as opposed to five mixed and fifteen unfavorable ones. Fickle critics had anointed



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Rafelson the new Dennis Hopper. Nevertheless, most likely thanks to Nicholson's presence, *The King of Marvin Gardens* was actually a success—with \$9 million in rentals, it finished as the thirteenth top-grossing movie of 1972.

In any case, *The King of Marvin Gardens* was an end-of-the-road movie. Rafelson's fiercely drab *Easy Rider* analogue conjured up the American dream of a Big Score—here, Jason's fantasy of a casino on a private island off Hawaii—and ended (in sudden violence) with the cry *What went wrong?* Perhaps critics at the time were responding to the movie's pervasive sense of disillusionment, as though the Rafelson protagonist had gone to Alaska and found . . . this? Hollis Alpert's not unsympathetic piece in the *Saturday Review* found the movie's "late-autumn bleakness . . . redolent not only of a dream that has passed but also a world that is passing."

\*

Virtually all BBS movies featured a pair of temperamentally opposed male characters—one manic and volatile, the other passively depressed. In *Easy Rider*, *Drive*, *He Said*, and *The Last Picture Show*, the guys are buddies; in *A Safe Place*, they are rivals. *Five Easy Pieces* has the male protagonist divided against himself, while, as the most extreme case, *The King of Marvin Gardens* opposes a pair of ambivalently antagonistic brothers and characterizes them as accomplices.

Whether or not this recurring dramatic device in any way reflected the relationship between Bert Schneider and Bob Rafelson, neither of whom appears to have been anything less than brash, the partnership they created had begun to resemble the decaying world of Atlantic City—at least to some observers. "I was watching a company start to come apart," *King of Marvin Gardens* screenwriter Jacob Brackman recalled,

citing Schneider's growing lack of interest. Schneider certainly had other concerns. From the summer of 1971 on, he was increasingly involved in radical politics, specifically the support of the Black Panther Party and the defense of former Pentagon analyst Daniel Ellsberg. Rafelson would recall to Biskind: "People were getting shot in the [BBS] building because of the politics, the Black Panther stuff, busts and cops and God knows what. I didn't know who the fuck was in that building. None of them could pay . . . I felt I was burned out." He also wanted to strike out on his own. (These days, Rafelson regards the last stage of BBS as "a joyous closing of the door" and stresses that the partners remained friends: "We just decided to quit while we were ahead.")

There was, however, one more project. During the summer of '72, as Ellsberg's trial approached in Los Angeles, Schneider decided to produce a feature-length documentary in opposition to the Vietnam War. Rafelson suggested as director Peter Davis, responsible for the controversial CBS documentary *The Selling of the Pentagon*, televised in February 1971. Originally, Davis's new documentary was to focus primarily on Ellsberg; ultimately, it expanded to encompass the war's origins in America and its prosecution on the ground, as well as what film critic Michael Atkinson would call "the semiotics of middle-class militarism."

The last project initiated by BBS, *Hearts and Minds* had already been in production for several months in South Vietnam when *The King of Marvin Gardens* opened. A year later, as the film was being edited, and not long after a regime change at Columbia, the studio attempted to cancel all contracts with and stop paying royalties to BBS, thus consigning the unfinished documentary to limbo. Ignoring the concerns of the new Columbia brass, who were fearful that the movie might burden the staggering studio with legal action, Schneider and Davis took *Hearts and Minds* to the International Critics Week in Cannes in 1974. Three

years before, *Drive, He Said*'s anarchic analysis of U.S. militarism had been booed off the stage; this time, the reception was considerably more positive. Indeed, after the New York *Daily News* killed Rex Reed's rave, *Hearts and Minds* became a cause célèbre. Finally, Columbia agreed to sell the movie for its million-dollar production cost; it was picked up by an outfit specially created by Jaglom and released through Warner Bros. for a one-week Oscar-qualifying run in Los Angeles.

Only weeks after winning the Oscar for best documentary (Schneider driving Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra nuts with an acceptance speech that included a "greeting of friendship" from the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam), *Hearts and Minds* opened in New York, where Vincent Canby hailed it as "an extraordinary movie which may well be the true film for America's bicentennial." *Hearts and Minds* was still in release five weeks later when, on April 30, 1975, Saigon fell to the Vietcong. Thus, the war's end merged with its cinematic representation and the ultimate BBS film. In more ways than one, *Hearts and Minds* was the movie that cashed the check the Monkees wrote.

J. Hoberman is the senior film critic for the *Village Voice* and the author of *The Dream Life: Movies, Media, and the Mythology of the Sixties. A prequel, An Army of Phantoms: Hollywood and the Making of the Cold War, will be published by the New Press in early 2011.*



# CASTS & CREDITS

# HEAD

## Cast

THE HEAD  
JOHN GOODMAN  
THE JUMPER  
JOSH COFER  
TESTY TRUE  
TREVOR LAMM  
LADY PLEASURE  
JULIE BENNETT  
MINNIE  
ANGELA LEE  
LORD HIGH 'N LOW  
DANIEL LAMM  
OFF, FAYE LAPID  
LOU ANN LAMM  
SWAMI  
MARK HAMM SINGER  
L. VITTELONI  
DANIEL LAMM  
INSPECTOR SHRINK  
CHARLES WALTER  
MR. AND MRS. ACE  
LUCILLE  
MAYOR FEEDBACK  
CLARK STRATTON  
BLACK SHEIK  
WILLIAM BROWN  
HERALDIC MESSENGER  
CHRIS BROWN

## INTRODUCING

EXTRA  
KIMI LAMM  
PRIVATE ONE  
RAY STRATTON  
SALLY SILICONE  
CAROL LAMM

THE CRITIC  
JOHN GOODMAN  
THE JUMPER  
JOSH COFER

TESTY TRUE  
TREVOR LAMM  
LADY PLEASURE  
JULIE BENNETT  
AND  
WILLIAM BROWN  
AS THE BIG VICTOR

OREH  
MARK HAMM SINGER

GNIHTON  
MARK HAMM  
REHTOM  
MARK HAMM

DNEIFR LRIG  
MARK HAMM

DNEIFFXES EHT  
MARK HAMM

YRATERCES REVOL  
MARK HAMM

FRODIS  
MARK HAMM

YRATERCES REVOL  
MARK HAMM

INCIDENTAL MUSIC  
COMPOSED AND  
CONDUCTED BY  
KEN THOMAS  
DIRECTOR OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
MICHAEL LAMM  
ART DIRECTOR  
MARK HAMM  
SET DECORATOR  
MARK HAMM  
CHOREOGRAPHER  
MARK HAMM  
"PORPOISE SONG"  
LISA GOMBER  
"CIRCLE SKY"  
MICHAEL NISBET  
"CAN YOU DIG IT?"  
LISA GOMBER  
"AS WE GO ALONG"  
LISA GOMBER  
"DADDY'S SONG"  
LISA GOMBER  
"LONG TITLE: DO I HAVE TO  
DO THIS ALL OVER AGAIN?"  
LISA GOMBER

## Credits

DIRECTED BY  
MARK HAMM

WRITTEN AND  
PRODUCED BY  
MARK HAMM

EDITORIAL PRODUCTION  
MARK HAMM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
MARK HAMM

# EASY RIDER

## Cast

WYATT  
MARK HAMM

BILLY  
MARK HAMM

GEORGE HANSON  
MARK HAMM

JESUS  
MARK HAMM

CONNECTION  
MARK HAMM

BODYGUARD  
MARK HAMM

RANCHER  
MARK HAMM

RANCHER'S WIFE  
MARK HAMM

STRANGER ON HIGHWAY  
MARK HAMM

LISA  
MARK HAMM

SARAH  
MARK HAMM

JOANNE  
MARK HAMM

JACK  
MARK HAMM

MIMES  
MARK HAMM

PICKUP DRIVER  
MARK HAMM

PASSenger  
MARK HAMM

GUARD  
MARK HAMM

SHERIFF  
MARK HAMM

GAT MAN  
MARK HAMM

DEPUTY  
MARK HAMM

DINER CUSTOMERS  
MARK HAMM

MARK HAMM

MARK HAMM

GIRLS IN DINER  
MARK HAMM

## Credits

DIRECTOR  
MARK HAMM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
MARK HAMM

PRODUCER  
MARK HAMM

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER  
MARK HAMM

WRITERS  
MARK HAMM



## FIVE EASY PIECES

### Cast

ROBERT EROICA DUPEA  
JACK NICHOLSON  
RAYETTE DIPESTO  
KAREN BLACK  
ELTON  
BETTY ANN STRICKERS  
STONEY  
DANNI FEEHAN  
BETTY  
BETTY ANN STRICKERS  
TWINKY  
MARINA VASILYUK  
RECORDING ENGINEER  
RICHARD STAHL  
PARTITA DUPEA  
JOHN SAWYER  
PALM APODACA  
HELEN KELLERSON  
TERRY GROUSE  
JOSEPHINE  
WAITRESS  
LORA CRAVEN  
CATHERINE VAN OOST  
SUSAN ANNAGET  
CARL FIDELIO DUPEA  
CATHERINE  
NICHOLAS DUPEA  
WILLIAM HALEY

SPICER  
JOHN MARS  
SAMIA GLAVIA  
TRINI LAMBERT

### Credits

DIRECTED BY  
ROBB RAFFELSON  
PRODUCED BY  
ROBB RAFFELSON  
RICHARD WOODFORD  
SCREENPLAY BY  
CAROLE EASTMAN  
JAS ADOBE NEWTON  
STORY BY  
ROBB RAFFELSON AND  
CAROLE EASTMAN  
JAS ADOBE NEWTON  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
BOB SCHNEIDER  
DIRECTOR OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
LAZARUS WALKER  
INTERIOR DESIGNER  
JOBBY RAFFELSON  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER  
HAROLD SCHLEIER  
FILM EDITORS  
TERESA PREDOMINICO  
CARLOS SHAPIRO

# DRIVE, HE SAID

## Cast

HECTOR WILLIAM CULLEN  
OLIVE KAREN BLACK  
GABRIEL HELEN BARGOTTE  
COACH BULLION ERIC LUDWIG  
RICHARD ROBERT DOWNEY  
CONRAD DENNIS JORDAN  
EASLY MIKE WARREN  
SYLVIE JUSTIN FABREAU

## Credits

DIRECTED BY JACK STERNER  
SCREENPLAY BY JEREMY LASKER AND DAVID KNIGHTHORPE  
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JEREMY LASKER  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER RON SCHAFFNER  
PRODUCED BY SHALI REILLY AND NICHOLSON  
COPRODUCER ERIC GITTET  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ERIC BOIS  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JEAN BOUTER  
FILM EDITORS PAT SUMMERSIT, DONNA CAMBRIA, THOMAS HENRY HOLMES, ROBERT E. WOLFE, A.C.E.  
MUSIC DAVID SHIRE

# A SAFE PLACE

## Cast

SUSAN/NOAH JULIA WILDE  
THE MAGICIAN JEREMY LASKER  
MITCH JACK NICHOLSON  
FRED PHILIP TROYER  
BARI JAMES WILLETT  
LARRY TOM LAWRENCE  
THE MAID JANINE HERSENMAIER  
LITTLE GIRL IN ROWBOAT PRONTO AWARD  
SEVEN-YEAR-OLD SUSAN SYLVIA ZAPP  
NOAH'S FRIENDS NICOLAI LUNSFORD, BROOKLYN GARRETT, KIRK COOPER, FRANCESCA HILLON, LILIE ROBBINS, JENNIFER WALTER

## Credits

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CLINT EASTWOOD  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER RON SCHAFFNER

IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION HAROLD SCHNEIDER  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JACK KRALISAY  
ITEM EDITOR MELISSA REGGAE  
MUSICAL CONSULTANT JIM DODD  
COSTUME CONSULTANT CAROLYN COOKE

# THE LAST PICTURE SHOW

## Cast

SONNY CRAWFORD  
TIMOTHY REED FARM  
DUANE JACKSON  
JEFF BRIDGES  
JACY FARROW  
JOHN SHELTON  
SAM THE LION  
BES JOHNSON  
RUTH POPPER  
CHRISTIE WATKINS  
LOIS FARROW  
LEEN BOOMSTAD  
GENEVIEVE  
ELLEN BRENNAN  
ABILENE  
LEROY FAGER  
BILLY  
SAM HOLLOWAY  
CHARLENE DUGGS  
SHARON STAGG  
LESTER MARLOW  
MAN IN JAIL  
THE SHERIFF  
JOE BLERRY ODE

## Credits

DIRECTED BY  
JOEY RICCIARDI  
SCREENPLAY BY  
LARRY ALMERSKA  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY  
LARRY ALMERSKA  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
BERT SCHNEIDER  
PRODUCED BY  
STEVEN J. REINHOLD  
DESIGN  
JOEL HORN  
DIRECTOR OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
ROBERT SURTEES USA  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER  
HAROLD SCHNEIDER  
ART DIRECTOR  
MAYER SCOTT ORPWOOD  
EDITOR  
DAWN GARDNER

# THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS

## Cast

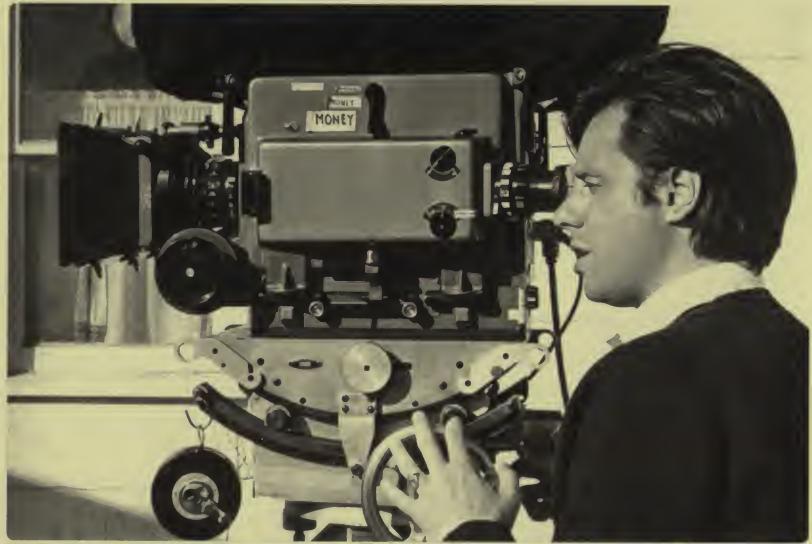
DAVID STAEBLER  
JACK NICHOLSON  
JASON STAEBLER  
BRUCE DERN  
SALLY  
LEONARD HARRIS  
JESSICA  
DELLA ANNE ROBINSON  
LEWIS  
DENNIAH SCATAVAN  
CROTHERS  
GRANDFATHER  
CHARLES WINN  
ROSKO  
ANNIE WILLIAMS  
SURTEES  
JOHN IRVAN  
LEBOWITZ  
SUZY GUYAR  
FRANK  
JOSE MESTRE  
BIDLACK  
WILLIAM FARRELL  
NERVOUS MAN  
CARLOS GARCIA

MAGDA  
MARGUERITE LUSS  
BAMBI  
RON THOMAS  
SPOT OPERATOR  
TOM CALLEN  
SONNY  
MAXWELL SONNY  
COOPER  
MESSENGER NO. 1  
JAN KURSKA  
MESSENGER NO. 2  
TONY BROWN  
AGURA  
JURIA TSUKADA  
FUJIRO  
OSORAKI YAMA  
AUCTIONEERS  
SCOTT HOWARD  
HENRY COOPER  
DANCERS  
FRANK HANCOCK  
WALTER TURNER

PRODUCER  
JOSEPH RAFFELSON  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER  
HAROLD SCHNEIDER  
DIRECTOR OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
LASZLO BOROVICS  
EDITOR  
JOHN F. FINCH II  
CASTING  
MARK & JULIA GHERTY  
ASST. EDITOR  
ART DIRECTOR  
JOSEPH RAFFELSON

## Credits

DIRECTOR  
JOSEPH RAFFELSON  
WRITERS  
PAT O'BRIAGAN  
SCREENPLAY  
JOSEPH RAFFELSON  
JACOB DEBLAIS  
STORY  
EXECUTIVE  
PRODUCER  
STEVE REINER



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## Head

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Additional photos and memorabilia courtesy of Andrew Sandoval, Terry Beck, Gary Striplin, and Kevin Schmid.

*The Hippie Show* courtesy of Historic Films.

## Easy Rider

Dennis Hopper commentary; Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Paul Lewis commentary, *Shaking the Cage*, and trailers courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment; *Born to Be Wild* courtesy of Nicholas Freudenberg Jones / Hidden Flack Ltd., London; interview with Fonda and Hopper in Cannes, from an episode of *Vive le cinéma*, directed by Pierre Mignot and first aired on May 22, 1969, presented courtesy of INA, Institut national de l'audiovisuel.

## Five Easy Pieces

Bob Rafelson commentary, *Soul Searching in "Five Easy Pieces"*, BBStory, and trailers courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

Rafelson audio interview courtesy of the American Film Institute, Los Angeles.

## Drive, He Said

A Cautionary Tale of Campus Revolution and Sexual Freedom and trailer courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

## A Safe Place

Henry Jaglom commentary, *Henry Jaglom Finds "A Safe Place,"* outtakes, screen tests, and trailer courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment; Jaglom and Peter Bogdanovich at the New York Film Festival courtesy of Creative Arts Television Archives, Kent, CT.

## The Last Picture Show

Peter Bogdanovich commentary from 2009, "The Last Picture Show - A Look Back: A Discussion with Filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich," and trailers courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

*Picture This!* courtesy of George Hickenlooper

François Truffaut interview, excerpted from an episode of *Vive le cinéma* directed by André Lubarthe and first aired on February 13, 1972, presented courtesy of INA, Institut national de l'audiovisuel.

## The King of Marvin Gardens

Bob Rafelson commentary, *Reflections of a Philosopher King*, and trailer courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment; *Afterthoughts* courtesy of Peter Rafelson

Additional stills for this set provided by the Everett Collection and the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.





SUN

MOTHER EARTH